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Peggy Boyer Long



## History offers some powerful warnings about the nation's oil addiction

by Peggy Boyer Long

**A**mong my memories of the 1970s — filed between images of motorists seething in long gas lines and Iranian militants kidnapping U.S. embassy staff — is the picture of President Jimmy Carter on national television in the winter of 1977 announcing his new energy policy.

Wearing a practical, grandfatherly cardigan, Carter managed to wrap the growing global energy crisis in old-fashioned can-do. Americans could, Carter assured them, reduce their dependence on oil if they simply used less of it.

It's worth remembering, even after experiencing that first flash of anger from the oil-rich Middle East, how ready and willing the nation was to enlist in what Carter called "the moral equivalent of war." It's worth remembering too that, for a time, we were winning it. We dialed down our thermostats and reduced our highway speeds, and the price of oil declined.

That history, the nation's earlier successes and failures, is the subtext of this edition. Our cover story writer Stephanie Zimmermann assesses the latest increases in energy prices and explores recent policy options.

Zimmermann centers her piece on yet another summer of expected spikes

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*"The downside, so far, has been that the country able to seize a unique energy opportunity has lacked the wherewithal to manage the next one."*

Kevin Phillips  
*American Theocracy*

in gas prices. Sources tell her that "[t]hanks to high demand, low gains in production capacity and geopolitical uncertainty, crude oil prices — upon which gasoline pump prices are largely based — are expected to remain high through the end of the year." This generally accepted prediction, she writes, has policymakers searching "for ways to blunt the impact."

Two of our other writers, Daniel Vock and James Krohe, revisit a related topic: America's efforts to protect itself from terrorism, the metastasis of fundamentalist militancy that helped drive Carter from office.

Vock raises a concern that federal budget reductions could undercut this state's readiness. Krohe worries more about an incompetent national bureaucracy — and an apathetic citizenry.

"What," Krohe asks, "is the prudent citizen to do who has concluded that the only thing we have to fear is government itself?"

He looks to Bruce Schneier who, in *Beyond Fear*, "urges ordinary citizens to do what citizens of all democracies are supposed to do: educate themselves about complex public issues, demand sensible and informed decisions about the allocation of resources from elected leaders and government bureaucrats, and hold accountable those who fail to make good on their promises."

On the prospects for this, Krohe is skeptical. "Alas, fulfilling their responsibilities as citizens is another thing the American people seem not quite ready to do."

But political analyst Kevin Phillips' vision is darker still. In his latest book, *American Theocracy*, Phillips posits a connection between U.S. energy policy and unrest in oil-rich nations. More to the point, he argues the Republican Party, for strategic reasons,



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promotes dependence on oil. (He notes the GOP successfully redefined Carter's "moral equivalent of war" into the acronym "mcow.") Despite the public face they've put on it, Phillips argues, American presidents have turned the U.S. military into an overseas oil protection service, Iraq being only the most recent example. Phillips calls this petro-imperialism. That's the short version of his argument, anyway.

Even this seems a lot to swallow. And it is. But Phillips, remember, made his career as a Nixon strategist. And his latest effort to show how the Republican Party, and America, has gotten off track offers the sweep of history and lots of insider details.

*American Theocracy*, published this year, is a worthwhile read, despite its unwieldy subtitle: *The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century*. It provides good context for the issues we raise here, and it brings into sharper focus recent news reports on connections between oil and world unrest.

Here's a sample from last month:

- The Associated Press reported that oil prices went over \$70 a barrel briefly, in part because Iran's president announced his country has succeeded in enriching uranium.

- *The New York Times* reported that militants in the delta region of Nigeria announced they were planning new violence against oil facilities there. In an editorial, *Times* writers assessed the problem. "Ever since Royal Dutch Shell discovered oil in the Niger Delta back in 1956, revenue from oil wells has gone to line the pockets of

Nigeria's elite: military dictators and corrupt federal and local government officials. Very little has gone to help the impoverished communities in the delta, which remain among the poorest in the world."

- *The New York Times* also reported President George W. Bush's proposal to drill in an energy-rich tract in the Gulf of Mexico faces a congressional fight. Even at that, the paper reports, the area is estimated to contain only enough oil and gas to power vehicles and heat homes for about 15 years.

Phillips addresses such short-term choices — and the self-interested choices. But his most compelling argument is the nation's compulsion for making self-defeating choices.

For Phillips, history offers some powerful warnings. The United States became a world power in part through its ability to exploit energy derived from oil, as other nations were able to rise by harnessing the wind or the energy in whale oil and coal.

Yet, as other nations have, we continue to shore up the foundations of an aging and declining energy source. Whatever remains, the world's oil resources are finite. "The downside, so far," Phillips writes, "has been that the country able to seize a unique energy opportunity has lacked the wherewithal to manage the next one."

Instead of continuing to invest in the economics and politics of oil, we might be better served by pulling those cardigans out of storage. □

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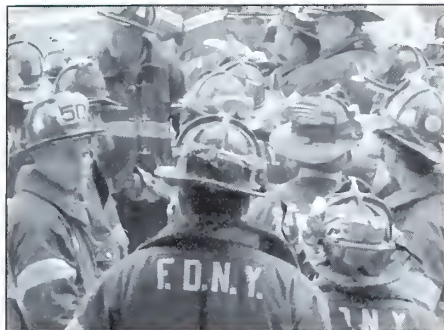
## Guilty of corruption

George Ryan joins a small group of ex-governors who were convicted for crimes connected to their service in public office, according to *Mostly Good and Competent Men*, a book about Illinois' governors. A federal jury convicted Ryan, a Kankakee Republican, last month on 18 counts, including mail and tax fraud (see Charlie Wheeler's column, page 37). In the modern era, former Gov. Otto Kerner, a Chicago Democrat, was convicted of profiting from decisions he made while in office, and Gov. Len Small, another Kankakee Republican, was found guilty in civil court of embezzling state dollars. Prior to Ryan, William Stratton was the only Illinois governor to face criminal charges for converting campaign funds to personal use. He was acquitted. Center Publications plans to update and reissue *Mostly Good* after the November election. □

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Bethany Carson



## State agencies are told to do more with less. But how much is too much?

by Bethany Carson

**Y**ou say tomato. I say tomahto. What the governor calls efficiency in state government, a labor union calls a crisis in staff erosion.

Gov. Rod Blagojevich has trimmed the state's payroll by 13,000 positions since taking office nearly four years ago. Now running for a second term, he is being criticized for this by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 31. The union, which represents 35,000 state workers, is challenging Blagojevich's tactic of reducing — by its count — front-line staff by 7,000. The hardest hit have been two of the largest agencies, the Illinois Department of Corrections and the Illinois Department of Human Services.

In a series of nine reports, Council 31 also drew direct relationships between staff shortages and inadequacies in agencies' ability to care for veterans, investigate child abuse, issue food stamps, monitor water quality, process DNA samples for criminal cases and provide personalized care for people with disabilities.

As usual, the math used by all parties has been fuzzy. What became crystal clear this spring, however, was that the state's budget has no extra money to rehire thousands of workers.

More important, the missing variable — and what policymakers have failed to

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*As usual, the math used by all parties has been fuzzy. What became crystal clear this spring, however, was that the state's budget has no extra money to rehire thousands of workers.*

solve in this multi-year debate — is the number of employees needed to run efficient and effective services.

The governor's administration says staff cuts have saved millions of dollars, and that amount will compound each year. Savings from attrition and consolidation totaled \$811 million in fiscal year 2005, \$900 million in '06 and a projected \$1 billion in '07, says Becky Carroll, spokeswoman for the governor's budget office.

While trimming the payroll requires some agencies to do more with less, Carroll says reducing head count is the governor's strategy for fundamentally changing the way government is run. She says the strategy has replaced administrative positions with more

front-line workers, stretching taxpayer dollars and avoiding cuts in health care or education.

"That has enabled this governor to avoid having to increase the sales or income tax or make dramatic layoffs in order to meet the state's needs," she says.

AFSCME, on the other hand, believes rehiring much-needed workers could save the state money by reducing overtime costs, said Council 31's executive director, Henry Bayer, at a press conference last month.

"The Department of Human Services, facilities for the mentally ill and for the developmentally disabled, last year alone there was over a million hours of overtime paid at time-and-a-half. That's enough to fund over 700 jobs," he said. "At the Department of Corrections, we had \$22-million's worth of overtime last year. A lot of that is due to the staffing shortages. A lot of that overtime could be cut."

Carroll disagrees. She says rehiring 600 corrections employees wouldn't save the state \$22 million. "What they failed to mention is that would actually add \$23 million in additional personnel costs. They're not taking into consideration that there are salaries, and pensions and health care costs that come with each and every employee that you hire."

This back-and-forth volley of facts has



caught the attention of state legislators.

Council 31's Bayer was joined by Independent Sen. James Meeks of Chicago. Contention over staff cuts has led them to back Meeks as a potential candidate for governor, contesting Blagojevich, a Democrat, and state Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka, a Republican.

Meeks joined the union's efforts and called on lawmakers to approve a budget that would replenish 2,000 front-line staff, predominantly in corrections and human services. The press conference, like many others in Council 31's campaign, used anecdotes from agency employees as evidence of the immediate need.

Ken Kleinlein, a local union leader and supply supervisor at the Western Illinois Correctional Center in Mount Sterling, shared his account. He cited an alleged rape of a dietary manager at Jacksonville Correctional Center, an inmate killed by another inmate at Big Muddy River Correctional Center in Jefferson County a few weeks later, and an inmate who was stabbed 22 times at his own facility about two years ago. "We don't have the amount of staff that we need for our own protection or for protection of our inmate population," he said. "And unless something happens, there's going to be more of these stories."

Whether hiring hundreds more staff would deter violence, however, is the crux of the debate. Members of the governor's administration say there's a loose connection between overtime, staffing levels and violence in prisons.

Bill Edley, chief of administration for the corrections department, testified to a Senate committee in March that there were 3,000 fewer corrections employees in 2005 than in 2001. Yet, in those four years, assaults on staff dropped by 50 percent, from 942 to 489.

Anders Lindall, spokesman for Council 31, says, "We're very skeptical about the accuracy of those statistics." In the report about prison safety, titled, "Maximum Insecurity," the union says the department would not provide data. The union's own research shows injuries to inmates and staff have increased with fewer guards on duty and more guards working overtime.

In response to what administration

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***There were 3,000 fewer corrections employees in 2005 than in 2001. Yet, in those four years, assaults on staff dropped by 50 percent, from 942 to 489.***

officials say is a demonstrated need, the corrections department is already looking to restore 250 positions with next year's budget. About 76 legislators side with Council 31 and say that's not nearly enough.

Sen. Deanna Demuzio, a Democrat from Carlinville, has six prisons in her district, which stretches from the Missouri border to central Illinois. She sponsored legislation this spring to restore staff. The proposal also calls on Illinois Auditor General William Holland to study whether state agencies adequately perform services and ensure safety with existing staff levels.

Demuzio's measure sailed through the Senate, but it was never called in the House. She says, while she didn't expect to get all 2,000 positions restored, anything would be better than nothing.

What is still unknown is the way in which staff levels affect the people served by each agency.

The number of nurses, technicians and doctors needed at a state-operated mental health facility, for instance, depends on the type of patients, whether they were committed by the justice system or entered the hospital on their own.

Tom Green, a spokesman for the Department of Human Services, says while the ratio of front-line staff for every client has increased at developmental centers, the ratio has taken a slight dip at mental health hospitals. Yet that dip reflects a lower number of patients who need higher levels of care.

One law professor says determining the appropriate number of people to staff a psychiatric hospital is similar to the logic in staffing an intensive care unit. The more severe the injury, the more staff is

needed to care for the patient, says Mark Heyrman, a clinical law professor at the University of Chicago Law School.

Heyrman also chairs the public policy committee of the Mental Health Association in Illinois and was cited by Council 31 as an independent source. He says he has no affiliation with AFSCME.

He says the definition of patients who need hospitalization has narrowed in the last decade. "We used to have 55,000 state psych beds. Now we have 1,400," he says. "No one thinks we should go back to 55,000. Whether 1,400 is the right number or not is a contentious issue, but everyone agrees that because there are 1,400, the people are sicker."

In turn, he says the number of qualified workers needed to run a psychiatric hospital today is higher than it was five years ago.

Heyrman says more staff also might be needed today because the lower number of beds means higher turnover in patient admissions and discharges, which are more labor-intensive. They require staff to become familiar with each patient's individual needs, and quicker. Then staff has to funnel all the paperwork to make way for the next patient. "The more people coming and going, the more staff you need," Heyrman says.

Two signs that a mental health hospital has too few workers, he says, are an increase in incidence reports and an increase in patients needing additional trips to the hospital.

"One of the things with mental illness is having human connection and then maintaining that connection," Heyrman says. "That relates to staff having enough time to spend with patients and understanding them, particularly to get to the bottom of what went wrong. You're talking about finding ways that people with chronic, treatable but often incurable diseases, get connected to the system and stay connected."

Given the election-year glare on the number of state workers, it may be time for policymakers to balance that equation, which would require concrete math and consideration of ways the numbers affect human beings. □

*Bethany Carson can be reached at [capitolbureau@aol.com](mailto:capitolbureau@aol.com).*

# BRIEFLY

## NUCLEAR WARNINGS

### Leaks at plant spark suits and legislation

Radioactive tritium spills at Braidwood Generating Station in Will County that went unreported for nearly a decade, as well as incidents at three other nuclear plants in northern Illinois, have prompted litigation and federal legislation.

Federal lawmakers have introduced a measure to require speedy notification of any leaks and to close loopholes in reporting requirements, and the state of Illinois has filed a lawsuit against Exelon Corp., the owner of all four facilities, as have neighboring homeowners.

Late last year, Exelon officials disclosed that Braidwood had leaked water contaminated with tritium, a byproduct of nuclear generation, four times between 1996 and 2003. In 1998, when Braidwood was under Commonwealth Edison ownership, more than 3 million gallons of tainted water spilled and was not cleaned up.

Exelon, ComEd's parent company, later announced that tritium had leaked at Dresden Generating Station in Grundy County and Byron Generating Station in Ogle County, as well, but the water had not left the plants' boundaries.

Tritium, a radioactive form of hydrogen, bonds easily with oxygen to make water and occurs in tiny amounts naturally. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency considers it to be one of the least dangerous radioactive substances because it moves out of the body quickly after it has been ingested or inhaled. However, exposure to elevated amounts of tritium increases the risk of cancer, birth defects and genetic damage. Experts disagree on what levels, if any, of radioactive substances are "safe" over the long term.

Exelon authorities say they were not required to publicly report the incidents when they occurred because tritium levels



*Attorney General Lisa Madigan and Will County State's Attorney James Glasgow announce that the state has filed a lawsuit against Exelon over tritium leaks from its Braidwood plant.*

did not exceed federal limits in areas where people might drink the water. But homeowners neighboring the Braidwood plant are upset by the long lag in disclosure. In the nearby town of Godley, concern is especially high because people depend on shallow wells for their water and lack a municipal water system.

"[The community] is very angry," says Joe Cosgrove, director of the Godley Park District and moderator of a recent public forum. "There's a lot of fear, some of it justifiable, some of it not justifiable. But the main thing is the disclosure wasn't there."

Godley residents first got wind of a possible tritium leak when they took the Braidwood station to court in 2001 regarding the plant's spill of diesel fuel, which was finding its way into their wells. At the time, Exelon officials had the tritium information barred from court, claiming it was not relevant to the case at hand. Last spring, townspeople pursued the matter further at a pollution permit hearing.

Following an Illinois Environmental

Protection Agency order to test groundwater at the Braidwood plant in November, Exelon found elevated levels of tritium outside the property. At one location, says Craig Nesbit, director of communications for Exelon, the contamination was about 200,000 picocuries/liter, which is much higher than the EPA's federal drinking water standard of 20,000 pCi/L. But "it's a small area right outside the company fence that exceeds that limit and it's next to a road," Nesbit says. "It's not an area anybody would drink from."

The leak has not been cleaned up yet. Exelon will begin remediation efforts once it receives appropriate permits from the state and county, he says. Since November, the company has tested about 150 private drinking wells in the vicinity of the plant. Officials say only one well had any detectable tritium, and this was at a very low level, about one-thirteenth of the safe drinking water standard.

Exelon launched a new well-testing program for homeowners in late March and

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promised to provide free bottled water until their wells were found to be clean, "just to give them peace of mind," says Nesbit. The company also has bought out two property owners and has offered to compensate 13 other owners for loss in property values.

All of the Braidwood leaks occurred because of faulty valves on a "blowdown line," a pipe that carries effluent almost five miles from the plant to the Kankakee River, where it is legally dumped. The tritium "just got into the wrong environment," says Nesbit, "which is why people are upset. We understand that completely, but this level of radioactivity in this water that we're dealing with out of Braidwood is so low that it has no impact whatsoever on anyone."

Neighbors of the plant are not content with this assessment, and neither are state officials. As of late March, local families had filed three lawsuits against Exelon, in addition to the suit filed in Will County Circuit Court by Attorney General Lisa Madigan and Will County State's Attorney James Glasgow.

The state's lawsuit cites Exelon for eight counts that include groundwater contaminations and reporting failures at the Braidwood plant. It seeks the maximum civil penalty of \$50,000 for each water pollution violation and \$10,000 for each day the contamination was not cleaned up, as well as other penalties.

"This is definitely a case that needed to be placed in public domain," says Matthew Dunn, chief of the environmental enforcement division of the attorney general's office. "What's going on here, the length of time that it's gone on, and the lack of accountability and understanding is about as significant as this type of a water case can get."

The private lawsuits ask for compensation for property values, bottled water and "loss of use and enjoyment of property." One seeks class action status for the thousands of people who live near the facility.

Braidwood stopped using the underground pipeline in November and has since been holding tritium-contaminated water onsite in temporary storage tanks. However, the tanks' safety was called into question in mid-March when Exelon officials reported that one of Braidwood's berm walls had collapsed in a storm, allowing about 200 gallons of rainwater containing tritium to flow out from the area near the tanks.

Meanwhile, U.S. Sens. Richard Durbin and Barack Obama and U.S. Rep. Jerry Weller, a Republican of Morris, have set federal legislation in motion to tighten reporting requirements. The Nuclear Release Notice Act would require nuclear companies to notify state and local officials of accidental leaks of radioactive substances, even if they do not pose immediate health emergencies.

Weller, whose district includes the Braidwood and Dresden plants, as well as the LaSalle nuclear facility where a rare site area emergency was declared in February, asked the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for an inspection of all Illinois nuclear power plants with "the highest level of scrutiny."

"The congressman is satisfied that progress is being made, but his constituents still have many significant concerns that they want to see addressed," says Chris Kennedy, Weller's spokesman. "The citizens who have to live near these facilities deserve better information and deserve that information in a more timely fashion."

Vera Leopold

## Jury finds Ryan guilty on all counts

Former Gov. George Ryan's guilty verdict in federal court last month not only made state history, but it also put a spotlight on ethics reform in this election year.

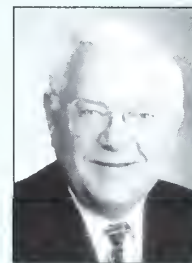
A federal jury found Ryan and his friend and lobbyist Lawrence Warner guilty of using public office for personal gain, the most serious offense, carrying a maximum punishment of 20 years in prison. Other charges included money laundering, extortion and obstruction of justice. U.S. District Judge Rebecca Pallmeyer could sentence them this summer.

After the verdict, Ryan told reporters that the battle isn't over. "Needless to say, I can say I am disappointed in the outcome," he said. "But I feel confident in our appeal, and there will be an appeal."

The investigation reaches back to the years when Ryan, a Kankakee Republican, served as the secretary of state, 1991 to 1999, and governor, 1999 to 2003. Last month's verdict makes him the third Illinois governor tied to political scandal in the past four decades.

That the seven-month trial led the jury to find Ryan guilty on all 18 counts surprised Kent Redfield, a political science professor at the University of Illinois at Springfield. "What that means is that the jury accepted the prosecutor's argument that there was a very pervasive criminal conspiracy in the secretary of state's office while George Ryan was in office."

Republicans and Democrats called for ethics reforms, including a ban on so-called pay-to-play politics. Meanwhile, federal investigators are probing Democratic Gov. Rod Blagojevich's administration, focusing on hiring practices and awarding of state contracts.



George Ryan

## QUOTABLE

“Saying that America is addicted to oil without following a real plan for energy independence is like admitting alcoholism and then skipping out on the 12-step program.”

*U.S. Sen. Barack Obama in remarks prepared for an April 3 speech in Chicago. Obama was explaining that he believes President George W. Bush hasn't followed through with policies that would help the United States break from what the president described in his State of the Union address as its addiction to oil.*

Bethany Carson and Jasmine Washington

## GOVERNOR'S BUDGET A working checklist

Gov. Rod Blagojevich won't get all of the \$1 billion he wants for new spending initiatives next year because the Democratic leaders won't give it to him. Senate President Emil Jones and House Speaker Michael Madigan said the state needs to spend within its means and the governor wants too much.

Some of the governor's proposals have been modified or held. Here's a list of programs that could receive funding in next year's budget, which had yet to be determined by mid-April.

**Elementary education** The state will spend \$10 million to hire teachers and reduce the size of some kindergarten through third-grade classes. The program is one portion of the governor's plan to increase spending on early education by \$400 million. Another portion, spending \$45 million to offer preschool to every 3- and 4-year-old, wasn't called.

**Veterans' health care** The Senate approved a \$10-million program to provide veterans with health insurance and access to medical services. The program would start in September and could help about 7,000 uninsured veterans in the first year. About \$6 million is expected to come from the state's main checkbook.

**Nursing shortage** The Senate also approved a program to help nurse educators repay student loans. The \$1.3-million plan includes scholarships and a nursing center to focus on recruitment.

**Tuition tax credit** Sen. President Emil Jones has said he wants to modify the governor's \$90-million idea to offer a \$1,000 tuition tax credit to college students with good grades.

**Revenue sources** The governor's ideas for paying for the new programs remained on hold. He had suggested selling the state's \$3.5-billion student loan portfolio, transferring millions of surplus dollars from dedicated funds and charging a sales tax on fuel produced in Illinois but sold out of state.

**Construction bonds** A proposal to borrow about \$4 billion for road and school projects was in limbo in mid-April. The issue is expected to be discussed in the fall.

Bethany Carson

## LEGISLATIVE CHECKLIST

The legislature missed its goal of approving a state budget by the first week of April, but lawmakers were able to send some legislation to the governor.

### ✓ Veterans' funerals

Hate groups would be banned from protesting within 200 feet of veterans' funerals under a proposal supported by Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn. Gov. Rod Blagojevich is expected to sign the measure. Hateful language, shouting and loud noises would be banned before, during and after services. The measure was a response to protests by opponents of policies on gays in the military who are picketing funerals of soldiers who served in Iraq.

### ✓ HIV tests

If a mother refuses to get tested for HIV before she gives birth, her newborn would be checked under a measure that landed on the governor's desk. Doctors say early detection of HIV would save more than a third of infected babies.

### ✓ Charity care

Lawmakers approved one of two measures supported by Attorney General Lisa Madigan regulating hospitals' commitment to charitable care. Hospitals would have to educate patients about payment options under the approved measure, which is expected to receive the governor's signature. Uninsured patients would be placed on a payment plan and could not be sued for failing to pay their bills.

Madigan is meeting with hospital officials to discuss the more controversial proposal, which would require not-for-profit hospitals to designate a percentage of their operating costs to care for uninsured patients.

### ✓ Smoking bans

Counties would be able to ban smoking in bars and restaurants under a proposal that went to the governor. Cities already can do so. The plan would let unincorporated areas approve similar restrictions so that smoking bans would evenly affect businesses throughout the area.

### ✓ Dangerous dogs

In response to vicious dog attacks, lawmakers sent the governor two measures that would require owners to be more responsible. Owners could face felony charges if they don't keep their dogs in safe enclosures or if they allow them to attack people or other dogs. Counties could create restrictions on dogs that run loose.

Another measure would require felons to have their dogs spayed or neutered, a response to concerns about people who train dogs to protect drug houses.

### ✗ Train subsidies

Amtrak wants to add more round-trips in Illinois, but says it can't do so without a boost from the state. A bipartisan group of lawmakers called for \$16 million more in spending for railroad services, which they said would help Illinois move to the front of the line for federal funding. The combination of state and federal funds would allow Amtrak to add four round-trips: two through Chicago, Springfield and St. Louis; one between Chicago and Carbondale; and one between Chicago and Quincy.

Amtrak's top executive, David Hughes, says the added routes would save the state money. Rank-and-file lawmakers are required to travel by the cheapest means between their home districts and the state Capitol, but a state audit said delayed rail services have prevented train travel from being the cheapest.

The legislation gained the support of 48 senators and 97 representatives, but it stalled in the Senate.

Jasmine Washington and Bethany Carson



## WHO HAS AIDS? State details trends

Minority populations make up the majority of HIV and AIDS patients in Illinois. More than half of all HIV cases in this state are African Americans, according to the Illinois Department of Public Health. At the same time, the number of cases is rising within the state's Latino population. At a 13 percent infection rate, Latinos make up the second-largest group of patients. This constitutes a significant number of individual cases because Illinois has one of the largest Latino populations in the nation.

Leony Calderón, program coordinator and HIV testing counselor with the Chicago-based HIV and AIDS outreach program VIDA/SIDA, says there are culture-specific reasons for incidences of AIDS within the Latino community. For example, male homosexual intercourse remains the most prevalent way Mexicans contract the disease, while Puerto Ricans most often get it through drug use.

Calderón relies on word of mouth among teenagers and homosexual Latinos to share information about HIV and AIDS prevention, testing and sexual protection through their social networks.

"Everyone is not going to receive the same information the same way," she says. "The best advertisement is word of mouth, but we have to also provide resources that are age-, gender-, language- and culture-competent to the community."

To reach Latinos who live outside of the

Chicago region, the Illinois Department of Public Health funds a project through the Renz Addiction Counseling Center in Elgin. That program trains peer outreach workers in Lake County and Bloomington, Champaign-Urbana, Peoria and Rock Island. It also publishes such prevention materials as pamphlets and magazines in Spanish.

Illinoisans over the age of 50 constitute the third-largest population group. They account for 10 percent of HIV cases in the state and account for the same percentage of all new AIDS cases in the country, according to the National Association on HIV over Fifty.

Jane Fowler, the founder of two organizations that target people over 50, HIV Wisdom For Older Women, as well as the National Association on HIV Over Fifty, says the high rate of the disease within this population can be attributed mostly to people living longer with HIV. Still, public health officials are seeing new infections.

Fowler says the perception that older people don't have active sex lives or use drugs leads to misdiagnosis. "How often does a physician or nurse practitioner take a sexual history or drug history or even ask older people about drug use?"

This population has become relatively high-risk for the disease, says Fowler, partially because of the growing number of older people coming out of long-term relationships, the emergence of sexual

performance drugs and ignorance about contraception.

Fowler, who became HIV-positive in her late 50s, says education is the only true method of prevention. "You can never know the sexual history of anyone except yourself."

In Illinois, a pilot initiative targeting HIV prevention among people older than 50 is under development, according to Public Health. But while the number of patients is on the rise, some programs that target specific populations at risk for HIV and AIDS are running on fumes after federal budget cuts rationed money to the states. Prevention programs have become low priority as financially strapped states have shifted money to other initiatives.

"There is a definite lack of funding for resources and education," says Calderón. "Cuts do not allow outreach."

*Jasmine Washington*



### Illinois HIV/AIDS stats

#### 32,807 AIDS cases

By ethnicity

<b>White, not Hispanic</b>	37 percent
<b>Black, not Hispanic</b>	50 percent
<b>Hispanic</b>	13 percent
<b>Other</b>	1 percent

#### Overall state population

(2000 U.S. Census figures)

<b>White, not Hispanic</b>	75.1 percent
<b>Black</b>	15.6 percent
<b>Hispanic</b>	12.3 percent

#### 14,347 HIV cases

By ethnicity

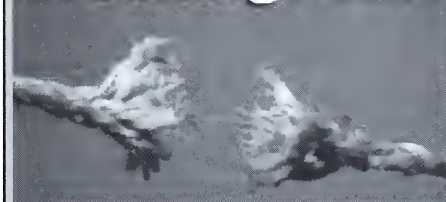
<b>White, not Hispanic</b>	31 percent
<b>Black, not Hispanic</b>	52 percent
<b>Hispanic</b>	13 percent
<b>Other</b>	4 percent

By age

<b>0-12</b>	2 percent
<b>13-19</b>	3 percent
<b>20-24</b>	10 percent
<b>25-29</b>	14 percent
<b>30-34</b>	18 percent
<b>35-39</b>	18 percent
<b>40-44</b>	15 percent
<b>45-49</b>	10 percent
<b>Over 49</b>	10 percent

SOURCE: Illinois Department of Public Health HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report, January 2006

### Breaking Point



Backlogs for DNA testing.

State parks run down.

Abused children at risk.

Food stamps and medical benefits delayed. Unsafe prisons. Lax environmental oversight. Veterans homes with long waiting lists.

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Learn more about the Campaign for Responsible Priorities at [www.afscme31.org](http://www.afscme31.org).

## FOOD FIGHT Snack ban blocked

Gov. Rod Blagojevich's two-year battle to remove junk food from schools was dealt another blow when a legislative committee rejected his plan last month. Members of the bipartisan Joint Committee on Administrative Rules said the proposal needed to take a more comprehensive approach to improving school nutrition before it could approve the rule.

The plan, supported by the Illinois State Board of Education, would have banned such items as candy, chips and soda from being sold in elementary and middle schools.

Committee members supported the concerns of the governor and the board about healthy food in schools, but they had received numerous letters from school districts opposing the proposal. Some education officials say the proposed rule is too restrictive and could hurt schools that depend on money from junk food sales.

Concerns about involving districts in the rule-making process led committee members to deny the state board's request for a 45-day extension.

Rep. Larry McKeon, a member of the committee, said the board and the governor should redirect the focus to health education, diet and exercise instead of restricting junk food "so that it's not just chips in vending machines and sugar-laden soda pop you're dealing with, but nutrition in a more global sense," the Chicago Democrat said.

McKeon suggested the board wait on recommendations from a state task force about children's wellness that are scheduled to be released in January 2007.

The committee voted 10-1 against the rule. The only lawmaker in support of the ban was Democratic Rep. David Miller of Calumet City, who is a dentist.

Jasmine Washington

## CAN YOU HEAR ME?

### Study warns that hands-free devices don't make it safe to use a cell phone while driving

Jacob Rose has scientific evidence for policymakers who want to limit drivers' cell phone use. The Southern Illinois University Carbondale accounting professor found that laws banning drivers from using hand-held phones are largely ineffective because holding the phone is not the primary cause of accidents or distraction. But more important than recognizing the problem is the finding that proper training can lessen the number and severity of accidents related to drivers' use of cell phones, says Rose, who worked on the study along with his colleague James Hunton, an accounting professor at Bentley College in Waltham, Mass.

"We concluded that it was the conversation, not the technology, that was to blame, and because of this, we can teach people how better to deal with conversation while driving," says Rose.

"It is something that can be learned."

The study, *Cellular Telephones and Driving Performance: The Effects of Attentional Demands on Motor Vehicle Crash Risk*, found that having a conversation over a phone, hands-free or not, requires more concentration than one with a passenger.

"Our results indicate that the lack of nonverbal cues in mobile phone conversation creates the additional mental burdens."

Drivers, in effect, have to divert more attention to imagining a person in the virtual world than they do when talking to a passenger. One experiment showed people who used a hands-free cell phone while driving a car were four and a half times more likely to be in a serious accident than if they were not talking on the phone. However, research also showed that drivers who had been trained had 50 percent fewer mishaps.

To reduce accident rates associated with cell phone use, Rose and Hunton suggest that policymakers could require drivers to take specialized training programs to earn the right to use a mobile phone while driving.

"Using this approach, drivers who work in businesses where cell phone use is essential would receive training," says Rose, "and the training programs could also generate state and/or federal revenues while saving lives."

Beverly Scobell

Photograph by Russell Bailey, courtesy of Southern Illinois University Carbondale



Jacob Rose, an associate professor of accounting at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, says it's the conversation that distracts drivers — not the act of holding the cell phone.



## Panel reviews crime code

Lawmakers could approve revisions to the state's criminal code during their fall session, according to members of a reform commission.

The bipartisan Criminal Law Edit, Alignment and Reform Commission, CLEAR for short, consists of lawmakers, lawyers and judicial officials. This spring, some members testified to a special joint session of the House and Senate Judiciary committees.

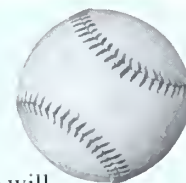
Cook County State's Attorney Richard Devine, a commissioner, says it's common-sense public policy to improve the state's criminal laws so they're "readable, consistent and efficient." Illinois' criminal code has not been revised in 45 years. (See *Illinois Issues*, May 2001, page 20.)

Rep. Robert Molaro, a Chicago Democrat, says the group isn't changing the laws, but merely making sure they're consistent.

One focus is the code's 50 areas of unconstitutionality, says Peter Baroni, co-director of the commission's staff. However, the commission will not undertake the issue of disproportionate sentencing, which has fueled national debate because some believe such minor crimes as first-time drug offenses receive harsher punishments than more severe crimes.

Sen. John Cullerton, a Chicago Democrat, and Sen. Kirk Dillard, a Hinsdale Republican, are members of the commission. Joe Birkett, DuPage County state's attorney and lieutenant governor candidate, also is a member. Former Gov. James R. Thompson, who pushed major changes in sentencing in the 1970s, serves as co-chair with former Judge Gino DiVito, a Chicago lawyer. *Jasmine Washington*

## White Sox host Utica Little League players



May 6 is Utica Little League Day at U.S. Cellular Field, home of the Chicago White Sox, World Series champions. In attendance will be Little Leaguers who changed their team name to the White Sox to honor the Major Leaguers who helped rebuild their ball field following the 2004 tornado that destroyed much of their town.

White Sox Charities donated more than \$5,000 in equipment and supplies to repair the damaged field. Utica was able to play ball at home last year thanks to that gift and additional donations from other Little League teams, including one in Naperville that never shared a field but still passed the hat at their home games.

Two White Sox players, catcher Chris Widger and pitcher Cliff Politte, along with Southpaw the mascot, attended the Utica opening day ceremony held to thank contributors for the restored field.

It was an exciting, healing moment for the 5- to 12-year-olds, who had had a rough year, says Andy Durdan, vice president of the local league. "The White Sox really stepped up to the plate when our team, our town was in a tough spot."

This March, the World Series trophy made a stop at the rebuilt Little League field.

*Beverley Scobell*

## UPDATES

- Amid congressional ethics scandals, former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, a U.S. representative from Texas, announced he plans to resign his seat. (See *Illinois Issues*, February, page 26.)
- Gov. Rod Blagojevich ordered pharmacists to post information on the availability of the Plan B emergency contraceptive. (See *Illinois Issues*, February, page 10.)
- A judge found the man who shot to death a state Capitol security guard not guilty by reason of insanity. (See *Illinois Issues*, November 2004, page 10.)
- Five central Illinois counties, including Sangamon, where Springfield is located, were declared federal disaster areas following tornadoes that hit March 12. (See *Illinois Issues*, April, page 13.)

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## Illinois scientist finds frog communicates by ultrasound

The natural world always holds the promise of unexpected discoveries. No one knows this better than scientist Albert Feng, whose research on a species of Chinese frog has revealed its ability to hear and respond to ultrasonic calls. It's the first amphibian known to use this communication technique.

Feng, professor of molecular and integrative physiology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, has published three sets of findings on the concave-eared torrent frog, the latest appearing in the March 16 issue of *Nature* magazine. Known by the scientific name *Amolops tormotus*, the uncommon species is found only in two locations in China.

A biologist at Cornell University first acquainted Feng with the arboreal amphibian. Feng, a researcher at UIUC's Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology, originally wanted to know why they have recessed eardrums when frogs typically have visible external eardrums. To study them, he and his colleagues visited Tao Hua Creek in the foothills of the mountainous Huangshan Hot Springs region in 2000.

One night, when the frogs they were watching were silent, the researchers heard what sounded like elaborate birdsong coming from a nearby stream bank. Upon investigation, "we found out they were frogs," says Feng, "and not only that, but the very frogs we were trying to study."

Unlike most frogs, which produce simple vocalizations, males of this Chinese species produce a high-pitched bird-like song. Each individual may have a distinct call, Feng says. "They have a very rich repertoire with a tremendous variety of calls."

Some of the vocalizations went beyond the limit of recording devices, and later measurements with special equipment found that the frogs' singing entered the ultrasonic range. It registered at 60-80 kHz, well above the audible limit. And, during a thunderous rainstorm, the frogs seemed to turn it up a notch, producing calls that were more than 120 kHz. This led Feng to wonder if the sounds were broadcast for other frogs to hear rather than being accidental byproducts of the frog's calling mechanism.

In 2005, using a transmitter that could separate the audible and ultrasonic components of the song, the researchers played back the

ultrasonic calls and found that some male frogs quickly responded to them with their own audible and ultrasonic calls. Studies of their physiology confirmed they could register the sounds.

Ultrasonic communication was formerly thought to be confined to bats, whales and dolphins, creatures with advanced sonar systems. "This is totally unexpected," says Feng, who has been studying frogs and bats for more than 30 years. "No one would imagine frogs could hear ultrasound."

And it explains their unusual eardrums. The membrane has to be small and thin to receive ultrasound, and it has to be closer to the ear. The recessed eardrums protect the fragile membranes and reduce that distance.

Feng believes the frogs' ability is an evolutionary adaptation to the problem of making themselves heard over the noisy background of their environment, like people struggle to do in a crowded bar. "More intense, louder sound is energetically expensive, and you get tired," he says. "The alternative is to shift the frequency to a different level that the listener will still be able to hear. It's an elegant solution."

Female concave-eared torrent frogs, the object of all this fancy noisemaking, have not been studied yet to prove they too can hear ultrasound. Feng plans to return to China this year to focus on them.

He says the find opens the door to many other possibilities that were previously not considered. The researchers already have found another Chinese frog that can hear in the ultrasonic range, and a Tanzanian toad that produces calls in that range. Preliminary studies on some bird species suggest they, too, could use ultrasound as bats do.

And the frogs' ultrasonic hearing might have an application in the human realm. In 1997, engineers at UIUC, including Feng, designed the prototype of an "intelligent hearing aid" based on frog hearing mechanisms that is currently under development.

"There is the possibility that people could develop ultrasonic-based hearing aids," says Feng. "Biological systems have provided these solutions, and sometimes all we need to do is figure out how to use that lesson to solve some of the same problems we have in our society."

Vera Leopold

Photograph courtesy of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



Albert Feng



An artist's rendering of *Amolops tormotus*



## BIO 2006

### Where who's who gather to see what's what

About 20,000 scientists, business representatives and government officials from more than 60 countries gathered in Chicago April 9-12 to discuss biotechnological innovations in such areas as health care, agriculture and the environment.

This year is the first time the Biotechnology Industry Organization chose to conduct its annual convention in the Midwest.

During the BIO 2006 convention, the organization released a study that estimates that, as of 2004, the nation had more than 1.2 million biotechnology jobs, which generated another 5.8 million related jobs.

Former President Bill Clinton spoke at the convention, as did Chicago Mayor Richard Daley and Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

*Photograph courtesy of Argonne National Laboratory*



*Andrzej Joachimniak specializes in imaging molecular proteins.*



*Charles "Chuck" Hartke, director of the Illinois Department of Agriculture, Jack Lavin, director of the Illinois Department of Economic Opportunity, and Chicago Mayor Richard Daley tour BIO 2006.*

*Photographs courtesy of the Illinois Department of Agriculture*



*Chicago Mayor Richard Daley and state Agriculture Director Charles "Chuck" Hartke check out a 1,100-square-foot cornfield that graces the exhibit floor at Chicago's McCormick Place.*

## PROGRESS REPORT

### State examines insurance rates

State officials expect Illinois doctors to pay less for malpractice insurance next year, but the company that issues most of those policies says the state's targets are unfounded.

ISMIE Mutual Insurance Co. intends to reduce the average rate by 5.2 percent for policies that would protect doctors if they get sued for medical malpractice next year.

The state's medical liability reforms, which took effect last year, limited the amount juries can award for pain and suffering caused by medical malpractice and gave the state the ability to review how insurance companies set their rates.

After analyzing ISMIE's filing, state officials say the company should go beyond holding rates even. They suggest lowering the average rate by 3.5 percent.

ISMIE Chairman Dr. Harold Jensen says the division's orders to reduce its rate by a certain percentage sets an arbitrary target. The company bases rates on a formula pegged to estimated costs. While Jensen says the state's review process is fair, he doesn't expect it to affect the company's rate-setting process.

The head of the Division of Insurance agrees to disagree. Director Michael McRaith says ISMIE correctly notes that rates should be based on the expected losses and trends in malpractice claims. However, he says the division expects the combination of tort reform and the transparency of rate setting to help inspire competition.

A handful of insurance companies actively write medical malpractice policies in Illinois, and their rates are independently reviewed. Yet McRaith says if ISMIE decreased its rates, the competition might follow suit.

"The fact is ISMIE collects nearly 70 percent of all the written premiums of all the doctors in Illinois," McRaith says. "Because of ISMIE's prominence in the marketplace, it certainly has an ability to play a significant role for establishing rates for doctors."

*Bethany Carson*



## U of Chicago researcher discovers missing link between land and sea

Paleontologists co-led by a University of Chicago professor discovered the fossils of a species believed to be the missing evolutionary link between fish and creatures that first walked the earth 275 million years ago.

The fossils of *Tiktaalik roseae* were discovered on Ellesmere Island in Arctic Canada in 2004. The find was featured in the April 6 issue of *Nature* magazine.

A team of paleontologists from the University of Chicago, Harvard University and the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia spent four years exploring in the Nunavut Territory, which is 600 miles from the North Pole.

The newly found creature — with a skull, neck and ribs like the first four-legged animals, known as tetrapods — had such fish-like characteristics as fins and scales.

*Tiktaalik* had a rather flat body and a crocodile-like head with sharp teeth, which means it was a predator, explain researchers, who include Neil Shubin, the chairman of the University of Chicago's department of organismal biology and anatomy and a professor from the university's Committee on Evolutionary Biology.

The scientists found several skeletons that were between 4 feet and 9 feet long. The fossils were in good enough condition for scientists to see that the creature's fin bones had joints like those that support limbs.

At the time the creature lived, the region that is now Arctic Canada reached the equator and had a subtropical climate. Scientists think *Tiktaalik* lived mainly in small streams. The name *Tiktaalik*, suggested by the Nunavut people, comes from the word in the Inuktituk language that means "a large, shallow-water fish."

*The New York Times* quoted Michael Novacek, a paleontologist at the American Museum of Natural History in Manhattan, who was not involved in the research: "Based on what we already know, we have a very strong reason to think tetrapods evolved from lineages of fishes. This may be a critical phase in that transition that we haven't had before. A good fossil cuts through a lot of scientific argument."

*The Editors*

Photograph by Dan Dry, courtesy of the University of Chicago



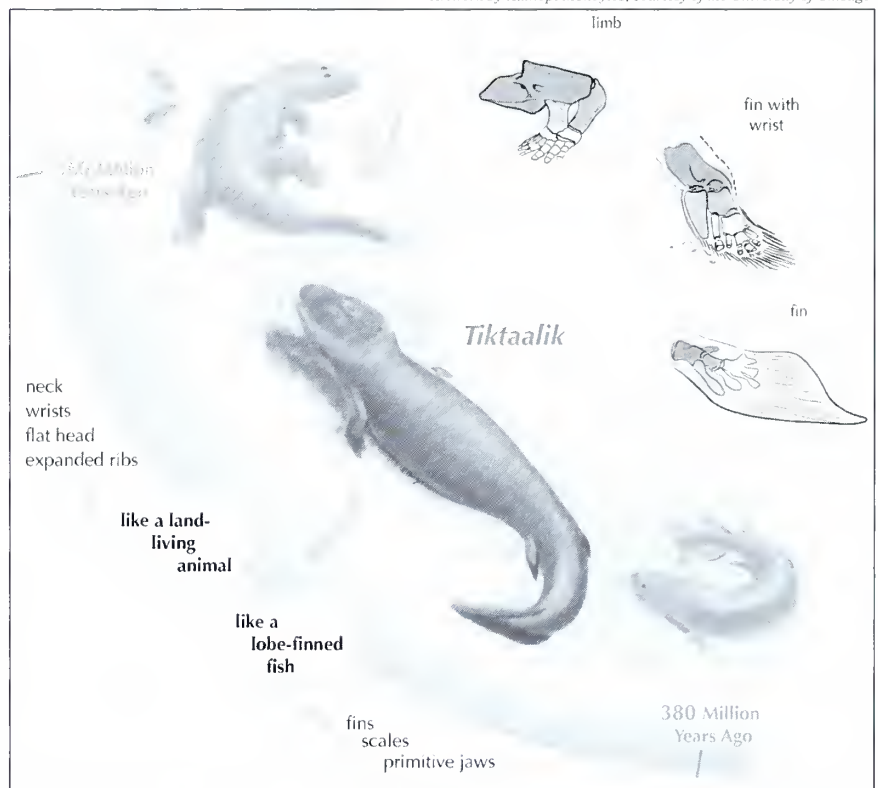
The University of Chicago's Neil Shubin holds a part of a fossil from *Tiktaalik roseae*.

Photograph by Beth Rooney, courtesy of the University of Chicago



Tyler Keillor constructed this model of *Tiktaalik roseae*, a newly discovered species that scientists describe as the missing evolutionary link between fish and the first animals to walk on land. *Tiktaalik roseae* is set in an environment that is believed to be similar to the surroundings in which it lived.

Artwork by Kalliopi Monoyios, courtesy of the University of Chicago



*Tiktaalik roseae* had a fin like that of fish that could be used like a limb to prop up its body.



## Pension debt sours Illinois' borrowing outlook

A major bond-rating firm in April gave Illinois a "negative rating outlook," largely because of the state's growing obligation to its underfunded pensions systems.

New York-based Fitch Ratings' negative outlook went only to Illinois and two other states: Hurricane Katrina-ravaged Louisiana and Michigan with its ailing auto industry. The negative outlook means that Fitch is considering dropping a state's bond rating, which would increase its borrowing costs. Illinois now has a favorable "AA" rating.

"Illinois must confront its massive unfunded pension liability; large increases in pension funding requirements begin in the next budget cycle to contain further growth in this liability," the Fitch report states. Next year's scheduled payment is \$1.37 billion.

The rating agency cited doubt that Illinois will be able to "follow its own plan to contain the \$39 billion unfunded pension liability. This intractable problem, including cash flow pressures, is apt to impair credit quality despite the breadth and wealth of the state's large economy, on which the current rating is based."

*The Editors*

## REPORTS

### Regional planning

Cook County and the five counties that surround it are expected to grow to a population of more than 10 million by 2030, according to the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission's *Realizing the Vision: 2040 Regional Framework Plan*. That's a boost of 2 million residents from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2000 count.

To respond to the growth, the plan encourages collaboration between regional and local governments to promote travel by foot and bike rather than car, to spark conservation of the area's water supply, and to create "mixed use" development that allows residents to live close to work.

### Uninsured patients

Long wait times deter many uninsured patients from seeking free emergency care, a recent University of Illinois at Chicago study found.

Researchers surveyed 157 uninsured patients at three hospitals — one for-profit, one not-for-profit and one public institution — near the major Chicago public health facility, John H. Stroger, Jr. Hospital of Cook County. Among patients who had been treated at the county hospital in the past five years, 75 percent were displeased by emergency department wait time, and more than 60 percent said they were unlikely to return to that so-called safety-net hospital.

The study, which appeared online in March in the *Journal of Urban Health*, was supported in part by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, a Princeton, N.J.-based philanthropic organization focused on health care issues.

### Disabled veterans

Members of the armed forces who were exposed to radiation through U.S. atomic bomb tests or service in the post-World War II occupation of Japan are often denied disability benefits because of problems with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' compensation procedures, according to a recent study by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Nearly 90 percent of atomic veterans have been denied disability compensation, according to a report in the university's fall 2005 *Elder Law Journal*. Of the 18,275 veterans applying for disability benefits for radiation-related illnesses as of 2004, only 1,875 claims were granted.

About 210,000 Americans, most of them soldiers, sailors or aviators, participated in nuclear tests between 1945 and 1962, and 195,000 members of the armed forces were stationed in Nagasaki and Hiroshima, where nuclear bombs were dropped in 1945.

*The Editors*

## Auditor questions transportation agency's protocols

Auditor General William Holland's report on the Illinois Department of Transportation — released two days before Secretary Timothy Martin was narrowly confirmed by the Senate — pointed to sloppy record keeping and questionable management.

The audit looked at 10 contracts totaling \$45 million that the department awarded in fiscal year 2005. At the top of the list of complaints was lack of documentation during the agency's evaluation and selection of contracts. One example: a \$900,000 agreement for which the transportation department had no written contract or working file.

The auditor found that in four out of 10 contracts, worth nearly \$12 million, the winning vendors were not the lowest-priced and there was incomplete documentation for subcontractors in six out of 10 contracts, which were worth about \$13 million. In eight of 10 contracts, the auditor criticized the department for not being "timely" in writing a contract after it was awarded or for allowing work to begin on a project before a written agreement was in place. Further, the auditor found there were questionable expenditures in seven projects.

The department disagreed with some of the findings on documentation and bidding.

In response to reporters' questions following his confirmation hearing, Martin said his agency has reorganized its professional contracting and business services divisions since the audit.

"We brought in new people. We have a director of finance business administration and put in different checks and balances. We have made a lot of changes during the audit process."

*The Editors*



\$

15.68

Sale

5.657

Gallons

\$ Price Per Gallon including tax

2.859

2.989



# Higher and higher

With no respite in sight from rising fuel prices, policymakers face increasing pressure to find solutions

by Stephanie Zimmermann

Some people define success as being able to slide behind the wheel of a brand-new, fully loaded, leather-interiored Land Rover. Not Neil Koreman.

The Chicago man bicycles three times a week to his teaching job at a suburban high school, plans to buy a hybrid when his current vehicle dies and, when asked what kind of car he owns now, replies “a green one.” This summer, instead of piling the kids into their well-worn Ford Taurus wagon for a road trip as they have in summers past, Koreman and his wife Margaret will fly the family to Canada and take trains across Quebec to Toronto, a route that will rule out their usual drive to a campground but will save on gasoline and, they hope, play a small part in reducing global warming.

With gas prices expected to spike at the start of the summer driving season and the public’s growing concerns about the environment, Koreman isn’t alone in his desire to leave the car behind. “I’m using less gas and I think it’s just better for my family. It’s better for our society.”

Such sentiments are becoming commonplace, even in the automobile-happy Midwest, as consumers face another year of high gasoline prices. That the high pump prices — which could top \$3 a gallon this summer — come on the heels of increased prices for natural gas used to heat and cool homes makes them even tougher to take. Thanks to high demand, low gains in production capacity and geopolitical uncertainty, crude oil prices — upon which gasoline pump prices are largely based — are expected to remain high

through the end of the year, according to the Energy Information Administration, the statistical agency of the U.S. Department of Energy. “I don’t see prices going back to where they were a couple years ago,” says Tancred Lidderdale, a senior economist with the agency.

Those high prices, and the prospect that they’re not likely to drop way down for a long time — if ever — are forcing policymakers to search for ways to blunt the impact. And not a moment too soon for anxious consumers.

## *To get more from your gas*

**Don’t speed:** Driving 65 mph instead of 60 mph is equivalent to paying an extra 10 cents a gallon.

**Do use cruise control:** Maintaining a constant speed on the highway usually boosts fuel economy.

**Do use the right octane gas:** Generally, only high performance vehicles need more expensive, high octane fuel.

**Don’t top off:** Filling the tank once the nozzle clicks wastes gas.

**Do proper maintenance:** Keeping tires properly inflated and getting a tune-up increase the car’s fuel efficiency.

**Do ditch that unused roof rack:** Wind drag can make your car use more gas.

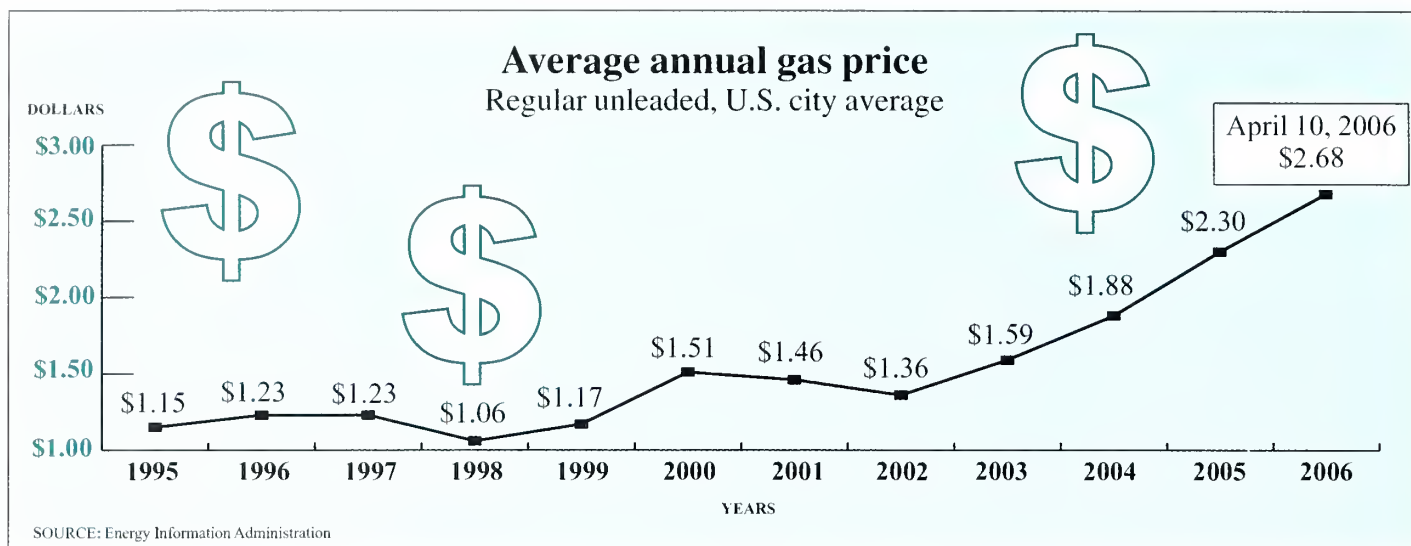
SOURCE: Beat High Gas Prices Now! The Fastest, Easiest Ways to Save \$20-\$50 Every Month on Gasoline by Diane MacEachern, November 2005

As the United States enters its fourth year of conflict in Iraq, and Louisiana and Mississippi continue to struggle with rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina, prices for the gasoline and natural gas most consumers depend upon will continue to rise, experts agree. Gas prices already had inched up to \$2.88 in Chicago on April 15, according to the Web site, [www.chicagogasprices.com](http://www.chicagogasprices.com).

The reasons are many. The summer travel season sparks a seasonal leap in gas prices. Beyond that are worries about crude oil disruptions in places like Iraq, Iran, Nigeria and Venezuela, and greater demand globally in such places as China, where the need for crude oil is expected to rise from 6.9 million barrels per day in 2005 to 7.9 million barrels a day in 2007 — a leap of 11.5 percent in two years. Domestic political issues also contribute. For instance, requirements that gasoline producers eliminate the additive MTBE in favor of corn-based ethanol — and the subsequent squeeze on ethanol supplies — will contribute to this summer’s price hikes.

The new ethanol requirements, enacted to help reduce air pollution, are good news for Illinois, the second-largest ethanol-producing state behind Iowa, but difficult for motorists in the short term as the market waits for ethanol production to catch up with demand.

Eventually, says Hans Detweiler, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity’s deputy director for energy and recycling, increased use of ethanol should contribute to lower prices as consumers rely less on volatile



crude oil. Nationally, ethanol production capacity is at 4.3 billion gallons a year, up from 3.9 billion gallons in 2005, and production is expected to grow.

Gas prices traditionally rise in summer, but analysts are warning that any constraints on supply, such as further problems in Iraq or localized disruptions, could make it a miserable few months.

For many Illinoisans, paying more to fill their cars with gas this summer is just one additional hardship after a winter of higher than normal prices for natural gas. According to the Energy Information Administration, the average residential price per thousand cubic feet was \$15.31 nationally in the last quarter of 2005, up from \$11.40 the same time in 2004. Despite relatively warm weather, heating bills this past winter in the Midwest averaged about \$1,100 per household, up about \$250 over the previous winter and about \$600 since the winter of 2001-02.

Some of the increase in natural gas prices was a result of disruptions in supply after Hurricane Katrina and other storms. But supplies seem to be tight in general. Natural gas production in Canada is at its maximum now, and few U.S. ports can handle liquefied natural gas imports from other countries.

Whatever the case, the fallout from natural gas price volatility can be seen in places like central Illinois, where the Peoria Citizens Committee for Economic Opportunity had to pay \$7,500 to heat its Head Start facility last November and December, up from \$3,200 in October and November. "We had to amend our

budget" to pay for it, explained McFarland A. Bragg II, the group's president and CEO. In Galesburg, Lynne Tyler, head of the local chapter of the American Red Cross, saw an influx of people this past winter with slightly higher incomes seeking assistance with their heating bills. "And now we're looking at electricity rates going up in '07, so I don't know what people are going to do."

The future could be grim. A hot summer with a heightened demand for air conditioning could make Illinoisans' natural gas bills soar once again. "We dodged a bullet [last winter]," Detweiler says. "We prayed for warm weather and our prayers were answered. The scary part is praying for warm weather is our national energy policy."

With such volatility in prices for gasoline and natural gas — two products most Illinois consumers are thoroughly dependent upon — what can be done to eliminate some of the shock?

The answer isn't one policy or even one area of policy. "There is not one solution," says Athanasios Bournakis, principal research economist with the University of Illinois at Chicago's Energy Resources Center. "There are going to be a bunch of solutions."

On the issue of natural gas, a new emphasis on expanding the nation's pipeline capacity, along with exploring for new deposits of natural gas and building more port facilities that can accept liquefied natural gas from overseas, would go a long way toward

reducing the industry's concentration in one region of the country. This would help bring prices down and provide protection from hurricanes or other disruptions, Bournakis says. "Our entire approach to safety is not thought out very well. Even terrorism [attacks on the distribution] could break up the system at any moment."

Illinois also should continue to pursue research into clean-burning coal and coal gasification, using one of the state's great natural assets to replace natural gas dependency, Bournakis argues. Solar and wind energy also must play a role.

Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan, along with attorneys general from Iowa, Missouri and Wisconsin, is working on another piece of the natural gas price puzzle. The group commissioned a report released in March that blamed speculative financial markets for volatile natural gas prices that seem to go up even when demand is flat. It has called for more oversight of these relatively loosely regulated markets, including adding a "cooling off" mechanism that would halt natural gas trading temporarily if prices moved too much.

Madigan also has spoken out against price gouging in gasoline sales. After Hurricane Katrina, the attorney general took to task 18 Illinois gas station owners whose prices appeared to be far higher than the increase in the wholesale price — with one station tacking on an additional 58 cents per gallon beyond the increased cost it was paying its supplier. The station owners settled, each



## Retail price of regular gasoline



SOURCE: Energy Information Administration

donating \$1,000 to the American Red Cross and agreeing to abide by the law.

To prevent future problems, Illinois now has an administrative rule in its consumer fraud statutes stating that the pump price can't rise disproportionately in the first 45 days following an emergency market disruption, such as that caused by the hurricanes. "We're not going to say you can't pass on your increased costs. But during an emergency, you can't profit from that," says Deborah Hagen, the attorney general's chief of consumer protection.

Hagen cautions, however, that the new administrative rule won't do anything to stop pump prices from rising this summer because of the normal summer price cycle and the current hike in ethanol prices.

For its part, the petroleum industry says pump prices could come way down in Illinois if gasoline weren't so heavily taxed — at a rate of some 70 cents a gallon in Chicago, says David Sykuta, executive director of the Illinois Petroleum Council. "The people that make a lot of money on that are the units of government," Sykuta says, and when prices go sky-high, those governments get even more.

The industry also blames environmental bans on drilling for oil in "politically untouchable" areas of Alaska, off-shore in the Gulf of Mexico and under Lake Michigan for contributing to our tight supply of crude oil and natural gas. "Most politicians are in the business of telling people they can have everything they want without having to do

anything," Sykuta says, "and then when crude prices go up, they say it's a big conspiracy by the oil companies. Anybody that tells you we're going to alternative fuel our way out of this is not telling the truth."

Still, old-fashioned conservation will help, not only for its eventual impact on prices but for the environment. U.S. Sen. Barack Obama, an Illinois Democrat, in remarks he prepared for an April speech, critiqued President George W. Bush's energy proposals: "You'd think by now we'd get the point on energy dependence. Never has the failure to take on a single challenge so detrimentally affected nearly every aspect of our well-being as a nation. And never have the possible solutions had the potential to do so much good for so many generations to come."

If we use less electricity, we'll also use less natural gas. The same thing goes for turning down the thermostat in office buildings and at home. To help keep gas prices down, don't buy that Hummer; drive a more efficient car and combine trips. Federal, state and local governments can encourage these changes by offering tax breaks for such activities as using mass transit or commuting in "van pools" of four or more people, as well as incentives to install high-efficiency furnaces or weatherproof one's home. In New Hampshire, the Pay As You Save (PAYS) program lets utility customers buy items such as energy-efficient air conditioners debt-free; the purchase cost is then spread out on their regular utility bills.

In Illinois, Gov. Rod Blagojevich

has proposed a \$500 tax credit for consumers who purchase a hybrid vehicle or a flexible fuel vehicle that can use E85 gas, a blend composed of 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gasoline. Blagojevich also pushed for sales tax exemptions, signed into law, for E85 and biodiesel blends. Now, says Detweiler, the challenge is to get more gas stations to provide pumps that can dispense E85; only about 100 stations statewide do so now.

Koreman, the teacher from Chicago, holds out hope that something good might come out of high gas prices: a greater willingness to conserve energy, develop new technologies and rely less on cars to get around.

"I think we need to examine how we get to and from where we're going," he says. "What we use costs us in one way or another." □

*Stephanie Zimmermann is a consumer reporter for the Chicago Sun-Times.*

## IN MEMORY

Michael H. Hudson was the vice president of public affairs at Illinois Tool Works Inc. and chairman of the *Illinois Issues* board at the time of his death in 1992. In his memory, fellow board members established an annual article to examine an economic trend in Illinois and its relationship to public policy. This feature is funded by a donor who asked to remain anonymous.

# State-level insecurity

The federal move to retool homeland security puts Illinois' anti-terrorism funding at risk

by Daniel C. Vock

The value of Illinois' emergency preparedness efforts was apparent just hours after Hurricane Katrina devastated Louisiana. One of the first medical teams to arrive in Baton Rouge, where thousands had fled, was from Illinois. And this state's squad was specially trained to respond to the disaster it confronted in August and September.

Yet, while Illinois can point to progress in homeland security, the future of its preparedness program is less certain. The federal pool that helps fund such initiatives is shrinking, and could dry further under the budget proposed by President George W. Bush in February.

U.S. Sen. Richard Durbin, an Illinois Democrat, says Bush's plan will leave first responders in the lurch and likely give Illinois as a whole less money to spend on homeland security. "If we end up with level funding, it would be a dream."

Despite this threat, state officials continue to be optimistic funding will be available to launch future efforts as large in scale as the response to Katrina.



*Members of the Illinois Medical Emergency Response Team meet in Louisiana after Katrina.*

In the wake of the hurricane, 11 members of a special Illinois medical response team arrived at Louisiana State University, where the stadium that normally housed the men's basketball team had become a collection point for people needing attention. Led by two doctors, the team included five nurses, three paramedics and an administrator. They took a field medical center from Carle Clinic and Foundation Hospital in Urbana, which was paid for with a grant from the Illinois Terrorism Task Force.

Trained to handle major health crises, the team worked with similar groups from New Mexico and the federal government

to set up a field hospital on the basketball court where the LSU Tigers play home games. The combined medical teams, which had to treat patients without the benefit of medical records, set up processes for admitting patients, keeping track of them and determining who needed care most urgently. They also created an on-site pharmacy. Within four days, the operation grew to an 800-bed field hospital, the largest in the state.

The Illinois team called home for more help. Eventually, some 52 Illinois nurses, doctors and other specialists joined a burgeoning force of health professionals that swelled to 1,700 volunteers. The effort amounted to the largest mobilization of health professionals in U.S. history, according to LSU.

The rapid-response medical teams are an example of Illinois' efforts to create a network of trained professionals who are stationed strategically to react to a wide variety of possible crises anywhere in the state. Many of those efforts started before the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. But in the wake of those tragedies, the state has used federal grants and state





*Illinoisans were among 1,700 health care workers who volunteered to go to Louisiana to treat Hurricane Katrina victims.*

funds to build its homeland security infrastructure.

Illinois has trained police to use special weapons and tactics, firefighters to handle hazardous materials, and all types of emergency personnel to conduct search-and-rescue efforts or respond to the use of weapons of mass destruction. It has set up statewide mutual aid agreements for police, firefighters and paramedics so that departments in crisis only need to turn to one statewide agency for reinforcements. It has created command centers to coordinate intelligence about terrorists or other criminals among a wide variety of government agencies.

Illinois also is creating standard, secure credentials for use by agencies across the state to control who can get to disaster scenes when a group of agencies are responding together. And it has rolled out the first wave of radio equipment that will allow myriad disaster response agencies to communicate with each other.

The state's efforts — coordinated by the Illinois Terrorism Task Force — have earned widespread praise, from Harvard University to local officials who have seen firsthand how the system responds in times of disaster.

Still, Illinois' emergency response initiatives depend to a large degree on federal funding that could become scarcer. And Congress and the Bush Administration are tinkering with the rules for doling out homeland security grants in an effort to get the most bang for their buck at a time

of mounting deficits.

The federal government offers a wide variety of these grants. Some are targeted to such cities as Chicago with large populations and high risk of terrorist attacks. Some are for limited purposes, such as port security. Others go straight to the states to achieve wider goals.

In the past year, Congress and President Bush have pushed to make more of those grants dependent on the likelihood that a state, or one of its cities, would be targeted for a terrorist attack. Previously, some of the largest grant programs distributed money based mainly on population. The new approach follows one of the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, the bipartisan panel that suggested ways to improve the country's approach to preventing terrorism.

"The allocation of funds should be based on an assessment of threats and vulnerabilities. That assessment should consider such factors as population, population density, vulnerability and the presence of critical infrastructure within each state," the Commission wrote. "In addition, the federal government should require each state receiving federal emergency preparedness funds to provide an analysis based on the same criteria to justify the distribution of funds in that state."

Last fall, Congress retooled the way the federal homeland security money is doled out for state-by-state grants to place more emphasis on risk. And earlier this year, the

Bush Administration announced it would take the same approach for grants given out to such major urban areas as Chicago and Cook County.

In concept, Illinois officials widely agree with the risk-based approach. After all, several factors suggest that Illinois would be near the top of the list for grants that are doled out that way starting this summer.

Chicago is not only the third-largest city in the United States, it's also one of the country's most important transportation hubs. Some of the most vital cross-country railroad and interstate routes go through the Chicago area. And the city has important symbolic landmarks, particularly the Sears Tower, that could be targeted by terrorists.

Furthermore, Illinois has more nuclear power plants than any other state, and securing those is a high priority in anti-terrorism efforts.

Still, there are concerns about what the new system for allocating funds will mean to Illinois. In May of 2005, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security cited cities that would be eligible to apply for port security grants. The agency determined who could apply based on the risk to the ports. The 66-city list included Milwaukee — but not Chicago.

By any measure, argues Mike Chamness, the chairman of the Illinois Terrorism Task Force, Chicago should have been on that list. "It's like getting ranked in the top 10 in the [college]

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***Durbin, the second-ranking Democrat in the U.S. Senate, bemoans the proposed cuts as one of several poor decisions by the Bush Administration when it comes to homeland security.***

basketball polls and not getting asked to the [NCAA] tournament.”

Even more frustrating, he says, is that Illinois and Chicago officials don't know what criteria were used in assessing the risk to ports, so they don't know how to address those concerns when applying for next year's round of port security grants.

A spokeswoman for the city of Chicago declined to comment on how a move to risk-based grants would affect the city, noting that Chicago had already submitted this year's application for funding under the Urban Areas Security Initiative. The city has asked for some \$170 million.

Durbin cites other slights, as well. He notes that Chicago didn't qualify for a federally funded urban area search-and-rescue team. Instead, Illinois decided to train and equip such a team on its own. And Durbin argues the federal government needs to do more to encourage state and local governments to develop regional evacuation plans.

Meanwhile, Illinois requested \$77.5 million under the state-by-state grants, up from \$74 million last year. Chamness says he's optimistic this state will receive the modest increase. “Our application is a strong application, but it's also a reasonable one.”

It would include \$35.8 million for intelligence collection and sharing, \$24.9 million to train and equip specialized response teams, \$10 million for a secure credentialing initiative, \$4.8 million to build a uniform communications system and \$1.8 million for public outreach. But even if the state gets its full request this year in the state-by-state grants, there's no guarantee that it will continue to receive

more money from all of the federal programs that are available.

In fact, the pool of money the federal government gives out for homeland security grants has been dwindling and would continue to do so under Bush's proposed budget. The president wants to eliminate entirely a program earmarked for law enforcement that directed \$12.8 million to Illinois last year, even while adding to other areas some of the money that was saved. All told, though, Bush's plan would cut grants to cities and states by \$400 million, down to about \$2.57 billion.

Durbin, the second-ranking Democrat in the U.S. Senate, bemoans the proposed cuts as one of several poor decisions by the Bush Administration when it comes to homeland security. “We're a long way from where we should be.”

But a spokesman for the Department of Homeland Security says the drop in spending should be looked at in context. “Since September 11, the department has provided an unprecedented amount of funding [more than \$11 billion] to our nation's first responders,” says Homeland Security spokesman Steven Llanes. But those costs, he says, were especially high in the wake of the terrorist attacks because states had to build their response capabilities rapidly.

While Llanes would not say whether Chicago would qualify for the port security grant in the future, he says the city's exclusion was “based on one year, one round of funding.” And while the city may not have received that particular grant, he says, it could still use money from several other federal sources to improve its port security. In any event, the department will continue to update its criteria for those grants.

Ken Alderson, the executive director of the Illinois Municipal League, says it's hard to tell what a change in federal funding would mean to individual cities. Like highway construction, he says, homeland security initiatives are paid for with so many sources of state, local and federal money that it's hard to predict the impact of a change in one of them.

Still, Alderson says Illinois' approach to homeland security has benefited cities and towns. Between 80 percent and 85 percent of the money Illinois spends on anti-terrorism efforts is directed toward

local units of government, he says, so even cities that never see a check from the state most likely have equipment the state bought or personnel who received special training through state programs.

And the extensive use of mutual aid should put the public at ease, too, he adds, citing several instances when the approach has paid off.

Besides the medical teams, Illinois dispatched hundreds of firefighters and police officers to assist in the Katrina relief efforts. Those call-outs were made smoother because of recent efforts to establish statewide mutual aid systems.

In fact, when the state put the finishing details on its Illinois Law Enforcement Alarm System in 2004, it became the first state in the nation to have a statewide mutual aid system for police.

When Chicago firefighters poured downtown to fight a fire at the LaSalle Bank's Loop headquarters, firefighters from 20 other jurisdictions ran firehouses in the city as back-up, thanks to the Mutual Aid Box Alarm Systems for firefighters and paramedics, points out Chamness, who chairs the terrorism task force.

Following a tornado in Utica in 2004, 450 firefighters arrived on the scene to help with the search-and-rescue mission. Those included many specially trained for such situations — six technical rescue teams, seven heavy rescue squads and one hazardous materials team, according to the Illinois Emergency Management Agency. Those responders helped save nine people trapped in the Milestone Tap building where eight other people died during the storm.

And state-trained hazardous materials teams were on hand to deal with the derailment of a train carrying hazardous materials in the southern Illinois town of Tamaroa in February 2003.

The municipal league's Alderson says those examples show Illinois' first responders can deal with natural disasters, accidental disasters and even terrorist attacks.

“Citizens should find it reassuring that we're going to have response capability, no matter what the disaster is.” □

*Daniel C. Vock, a frequent contributor to Illinois Issues, is a reporter for Washington, D.C.-based Stateline.org and a former Statehouse bureau chief for the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin.*



# FEEL-GOOD SOLUTIONS

*Citizens get the kind of terrorism preparedness they want, and temporarily feeling better is about all most Americans demand*

Essay by James Krohe Jr.

“The threat of terrorism forces us to make a choice,” explain the helpful folks at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on their Web site. “We can be afraid, or we can be ready.” Get used to being afraid, then, because ready — four and a half years after 9/11 — is something the United States is not.

Illinois’ Democratic U.S. senators, Richard Durbin and Barack Obama, have of late questioned the sorry state of terrorism preparedness at the nation’s ports and nuclear power plants — complaints that might be dismissed as partisan rants were it not for the fact that Republican editors and military experts and academics have been saying the same things for years. When it comes to the protection of rail yards, chemical plants, airports — each crucial in Illinois — there is no plan, and not nearly enough money. Osama bin Laden is still at large and the anthrax attack is still unsolved. And the government’s response to Hurricane Katrina proved that U.S. citizens have as much to fear from their own incompetent or indifferent officials as from terrorists.

Most of the criticism about terrorism preparedness is rightly aimed at the White House, but Congress is as much at fault, not only for failing to hold George W. Bush’s administration to a higher standard of performance, but for making the problem worse. Resorting to the frank speech that only a retired politician dare use, former Illinois Gov. James R. Thompson joined other members of the

Photograph by Jim Watson, courtesy of the U.S. Navy



*Rescuers work to clear rubble and debris in an attempt to find survivors after the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center.*

national 9/11 Commission in damning Congress for allocating billions in domestic security money on the basis of politics rather than risk. “Why aren’t our tax dollars being spent to protect our lives?” asked Thompson. “What’s the rationale? What’s the excuse? There is no excuse.”

What is the prudent citizen to do who has concluded that the only thing we have to fear is government itself? According to the democratic gospel, the only protection against that threat is alert citizenship. Bruce Schneier, in his widely praised 2003 book, *Beyond Fear*, urges ordinary citizens to do what citizens of all democracies are supposed to do: educate themselves about complex public issues, demand sensible and informed decisions about the allocation of resources from elected leaders and government bureaucrats, and hold accountable those who fail to make good on their promises. As Thompson said upon release of the 9/11 Commission report, “The American people ought to demand answers.”

Alas, fulfilling their responsibilities as citizens is another thing the American people seem not quite ready to do. The manifold failures of preparedness by the feds were well known by 2004. Yet anti-terrorism as a program — as opposed to anti-terrorism as a political pose — hardly figured in the elections of that year. (The conduct of a war was important in that presidential race, but the war in question was Vietnam.) Bush



was re-elected with a respectable majority of the popular vote, and the dithering of congressional incumbents did not prevent most from being sent back to Washington.

The sour stew of terrorism politics has lots of ingredients, including our national habit of forgetfulness, our capacity for distraction and our plain ignorance about complicated public issues. Some people won't think about it and some don't want to think about it, but it's probably fair to say that most just don't know how to think about it. The failure of Bush and his minions is not that they spend too little on what matters and too much on what doesn't — this criticism can be made about most government programs — but that they are failing in a larger responsibility to teach the public what it's facing, what the real options are and how much they might cost in dollars, convenience and, yes, freedom.

Of course, it may be that a lot of people are getting the kind of anti-terrorism preparedness they want. "If you went to the doctor because you had a badly damaged leg, she wouldn't pretend that she could return your leg to its undamaged state if she couldn't," writes Schneier. "Ignoring reality is not an effective way

to get healthier, or smarter, or safer, even though it might temporarily make you feel better."

Ah, but temporarily feeling better is about all most Americans demand from their lawmakers and public employees. They are no more willing to face the reality of terrorism than they are to face a shortfall in the Social Security fund or the national dependence on oil or the poor quality of the schools. Such voters want solutions that are easy and cheap, or at least appear to be easy and cheap, and usually punish at the polls any politician who refuses to pretend. As a result, priorities are set not according to rational assessments of relative risks but by the often evanescent priorities of an inattentive and uninformed public that overstates the exotic and the unseen. The result is overspending on the danger *du jour*, while threats that affect more people are all but ignored.

A lot of people who might have had things to say about the war against terror did not say them out of a belief that questioning the conduct of a war is impolitic if not unpatriotic. That notion is one of the more dubious legacies of our Mr. Lincoln. His leadership as

Photograph by Eric J. Tilford, courtesy of the U.S. Navy



*The massive cleanup efforts at Ground Zero were in the early stages as of September 16, 2001.*

commander in chief certainly was an issue, indeed *the* issue in the election of 1864, and it was during that campaign that Lincoln famously warned voters of the dangers of switching horses midstream. But that's just what voters should do if the horse is drowning.

Then, too, it may be that recent elections failed as referendums on preparedness not because people thought terrorism preparedness was too important for candidates to talk about, but because they thought it was not nearly important enough. Illinois may be at war, but almost no one acts like it. Most Illinoisans are sensible enough to know that the maniac they need to worry about is not the gent with a beard who's mumbling in a strange accent in the next airplane seat but the driver of the SUV in the next lane. Anti-terrorism may be one of the most important of the national government's responsibilities, in other words, but not many seem to think it is the most urgent.

Members of the Bush Administration may be lousy anti-terrorism planners, but they are accomplished pols whose instincts for partisan advantage are keen. The only reason they would dare to make preparedness a low priority was if preparedness is a low priority for a substantial chunk of the voting public they cater to. There are people, and sizable numbers, who will not rest easy until there is a sky marshal aboard every plane. (A policy that would take more marshals than the FBI has agents.) But such worriers are the lunatic fringe of homeland security politics. The sensible middle, which is where most Illinoisans are most comfortable, expects less.

This sounds like dereliction, or denial, on the part of the public. But might there be wisdom in the people's indifference? Back in 2002, journalist David Carr was one of those who challenged not only the feasibility of making "the homeland" terrorism-proof but also the wisdom of it. As Carr noted in *The Atlantic Monthly*, making the ports or the power plants or the subway stations absolutely impervious to attack would not prevent attacks, merely force a shift to more vulnerable targets. It is true, as one downstate sheriff told *Illinois Issues* in 2002, terrorists could strike anywhere. Yes, they could — but they are highly unlikely to. A gram



elevator is not exactly a Twin Towers in symbolic value, and anyone wishing to inflict maximum civilian casualties will not head for a town whose mass transit system consists of school buses. "Doing nothing to deter such events would be foolish," insisted Carr, "but doing everything possible would be more foolish still."

That doesn't mean it doesn't matter whether public money is spent on preparedness, or how much. In fact, it matters more. The less that is spent, the more important it becomes that what is spent is spent sensibly to achieve maximum protections against the most likely threats to targets of greatest potential importance. The real indictment of the federal effort to date is not that it hasn't protected every place against every threat — that would be impossible even if it were affordable — but that so much of what has been done has been done incompetently or cynically.

People who think about such things (which does not include presidential speech writers) have argued from the start that fighting terrorism is not like a war — not like a real war anyway. Al Qaeda resembles even an unconventional military force less than it resembles a criminal gang like the Mafia. An even better comparison may be narco-terrorists, an enemy much like Al Qaeda in organization and methods, and one that to date has done much more damage to the nation, if less telegenically. The United States declared war on the drug gangs in the 1970s, with now-familiar over-reliance on military means and similarly simplistic assumptions about the nature of the problem and the enemy. It has had results that may prove to be sadly similar too, since after three decades and billions spent to eradicate them, there are more drugs of higher potency on the nation's streets than ever.

The analogy with criminal gangs holds in another way. Ultimately, the effort against terrorism promises to be no more — and no less — costly and intrusive than the steps our society has learned to take against ordinary crime. Everyone has melded everyday precautions into their daily routines, into judgments about where and how to move around in the world, about where to live. We have learned to accept the spending of billions on cops and



*Firefighters head to the center of the devastation at what was once the World Trade Center.*

alarms and insurance and jails and locks. Much of that spending is unwise, but it has purchased a tolerable status quo. Even better, crime has taught everyone the lesson that we have yet to learn about terrorism, which is that it will happen, that some losses are inevitable — and that a society that was free of risks also would be

a society most of us would not want to live in. □

*James Krohe Jr., a veteran commentator on Illinois public issues, is writing a guide to the state's history for the Illinois Humanities Council. He is a frequent contributor to Illinois Issues.*



# A playbook for competition

Technology is advancing at a rapid pace and telecommunications companies warn Illinois could fall behind

by Bethany Carson

*Photograph courtesy of the AT&T Archives and History Center in San Antonio, Texas*



*Oak Park businessman David Meilahn won the chance to make the nation's first cellular mobile call in October 1983. He called sportscaster Jack Brickhouse. Ameritech Mobile Communications of Schaumburg provided the service.*

Don't blink or your mode of communication could become outdated. The cell phones that play music, take pictures and send e-mails are light years away from the invention of the telephone 130 years ago, but wireless services aren't even at the top of their game yet.

In fact, the entire telecommunications industry is entering a new era. Companies now are eager to compete in multiple sectors: local and long-distance telephony,

cable, Internet, wireless and fiber optics.

"The wireless industry is in the first inning of a seven-game World Series," says Michael McDermott, regional director of state public policy for Verizon Wireless. "Things that are yet to be invented will be developed, will be enhanced and brought to the consumer base far beyond our consumers' wildest dreams."

Time out. There's a catch: "But if you throw the regulatory blanket over us," he says, "you're going to slow down

the progress."

McDermott is referring to Illinois' telecommunications law, which has exceeded the life expectancy of a cell phone. It's been five years since lawmakers updated it. Meanwhile, some states, including Indiana, have relaxed regulations on the local phone lines. Others, including Kentucky, also are considering some deregulation with the intent to spur innovation and give consumers what they want: simplicity and reliability.



Two decades ago, Illinois led the nation in trying to enhance competition by requiring local phone companies to lease their wires to competitors at a fair price. Then, 10 years ago, Illinois came to the forefront again when it changed the way rates were set to protect consumers from unreliable services. The federal government even looked to Illinois in 1996 for insight when enacting a deregulation law at the national level.

The Illinois Commerce Commission began tying rates to inflation, which limited the amount companies could charge for individual services but also rewarded them for being efficient in delivering those services. The underlying law was scheduled to expire in 2005, but lawmakers extended it until July 2007.

Now AT&T, Verizon Communications Inc. and other competitors warn the Land of Lincoln may lose appeal to telecommunication companies and fall behind states that have already deregulated the industry, including California, Indiana and Texas. For Illinois consumers, that could mean slower progress in addressing the digital divide — the gap between people, typically in urban areas, who have more access to high-speed Internet and advanced services than those who live in more rural areas. But it also could mean fewer jobs if major companies invest in other states before doing so in Illinois.

As a result, state officials are preparing to step in. Before they do, however, lawmakers want to explore ways to ensure that all Illinois residents have access to affordable high-speed Internet as a way to prepare for a more comprehensive rewrite. Nothing is likely to happen before next year.

As the competition continues to evolve at a rapid pace across multiple sectors, the government is approaching regulations differently from what it did 20 years ago.

In the mid-1980s, economists believed the best way to serve customers was to give them as many options for phone service as possible, according to Jon Feipel, assistant director of the telecommunications division of the Illinois Commerce Commission, the state agency that regulates utilities. “You

## *The new digital divide*

The bridge that closes the digital divide will be made of fiber optics, long strands of pure glass about the diameter of a human hair. That’s the conclusion of state officials who have been taking a close look at the availability of high-speed Internet service in Illinois.

Only a few years ago, the term digital divide referred to the gap between people who had access to computers and those who didn’t. But with the development of high-speed Internet, the fissure has deepened between people who use traditional phone lines to dial-up to the Internet and people who use broadband connection, the much faster service that relays information through cable lines and now fiber optic cables, which can transmit clear signals over long distances.

The difference often relates to where people live. The Pew Internet and American Life Project found that by the end of last year, only 24 percent of people in rural areas had high-speed connections, compared to the 39 percent in urban and suburban areas.

In order to ensure that no one remains stranded with last century’s technology, state officials have begun studying the creation of a public broadband infrastructure. In September, the governor assembled the Illinois Broadband Deployment Council, a bipartisan group of state officials, consumer advocates and business groups. The council, headed by Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn, is focused on improving high-speed Internet access and eliminating that divide.

Steven Simon, a policy analyst in Quinn’s office, says Internet access has become a traditional consumer issue and a fundamental political issue concerning civic participation. “In this age of converged media, there are a lot of people who would be left out based just on location. Will people in Vermilion County be able to renew their driver’s license or have access to unbiased media outlets? Or will only people in urban areas have access?”

Rep. Julie Hamos introduced a measure in the spring legislative session that would provide all Illinoisans with high-speed Internet access. The Evanston Democrat says the private sector’s competitive prices on broadband services leave some people behind in this age of information.

“We can’t sit back and wait anymore,” Hamos says. “People need universal, high-speed, affordable Internet. No person or company can be competitive or even succeed without access to broadband.”

Still, state officials acknowledge universal access to high-speed Internet is a long-term endeavor. Meanwhile, some Illinois cities have chosen to bridge the digital divide on their own. Aurora and Rockford have pursued wireless Internet connections, or WiFi, for public use. And these local experiments could serve as models for lawmakers considering a statewide broadband initiative aimed at leveling the playing field between rural and urban areas.

The state’s approach to this issue could be essential to its success.

James Carlini calls the digital divide in Illinois the “digital desert.” The adjunct professor at Northwestern University and president of the network consulting firm Carlini & Associates says the state’s proposal for broadband is similar to using a Band-Aid for a major operation.

Carlini says the lack of specificity in the legislation leaves certain issues open to interpretation. He suggests the state should set standards for municipalities that take on their own broadband initiatives. Otherwise, individual networks could be vulnerable to hackers and could jeopardize the reliability and security of the statewide network.

The Rev. James Demus III, co-director of the Ministerial Alliance Against the Digital Divide, an organization that has a member on the governor’s broadband council, says politicians have to understand two key points: the technological revolution and the needs of the computer generation to compete in a global society.

“The computer today is what the library was 50 to 60 years ago. It’s the great equalizer,” the Chicago minister says. “A library brings everybody together to access the same information. Today, you can get what’s in the library through a computer.”

*Jasmine Washington*



## A menu of choices

*Major companies are starting to offer a cross-section of telecommunication services. Some are packaging those services into one bill, while others sell handheld computers that do it all. Here's a sample of the numerous ways people can choose to communicate in Illinois:*

### All-in-one billing

AT&T, Comcast Cable, McLeodUSA, Sprint-Nextel and Verizon Communications allow Illinois customers to pay one bill for their local- and long-distance phone calls, wireless services and high-speed Internet services.

AT&T and Verizon Communications are developing fiber optic networks to deliver television services and, eventually, Internet services in some states, though not yet in Illinois.

Insight Communications also offers the packaged computer services in Illinois, but extends local- and long-distance phone services through the Internet in Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio.

### Phone service on the Internet

MCI CallAdvantage and Vonage offer phone calls through their high-speed Internet connections.

### Cells and handheld computers

Cingular Wireless, T-Mobile, U.S. Cellular and other local providers offer cell phones and handheld computers called "personal digital assistants." The PDA devices let the customer make phone calls, send e-mails, receive faxes, talk on a walkie-talkie and download directions on a digital map.

*Bethany Carson*

would have choices for telephone services like you would tennis shoes," he says.

When the natural monopoly of AT&T — American Telephone and Telegraph — was broken into seven regional "Baby Bells" in 1984, Illinois was one of the first states to make a distinction between local phone and long-distance services. The commission preserved its oversight of the local wires to ensure basic phone service stayed affordable and reliable, Feipel says.

A decade later, the sectors in telecommunications started to blend. Long-distance phone companies wanted access to the local phone lines in order to take advantage of the lucrative local phone market, and local phone companies wanted to offer long-distance services to protect their vitality. Wireless services entered a gray area because they are owned by the big players, Feipel says. The state commission was charged with the role of arbiter and with creating a level playing field between start-up companies and those that had been controlling the wires in the ground for decades, all while shielding consumers from higher prices.

The goal was to give consumers choice, but no one knew how competition would develop, says Charlotte TerKeurst, who headed the commission's unified telecommunications division in 1999. "But we wanted to give it the opportunity to do so if the economics were there."

The economics were only partially there. Competition took off in the business sector of the Chicago area, but not in residential areas throughout the state. Feipel says that relates to the 1990s Internet boom, when federal commercial restrictions on the Internet were lifted and thousands of public and private entities began posting information online. Local carriers benefited because, back then, people were using local phone lines to dial up the Internet. Suddenly, they didn't have as much incentive to enter the long-distance market.

At the same time, Feipel says there was a consumer backlash to the dizzying number of choices. "Consumers don't typically spend the time and effort to shop around for phone services like we wanted them to," he says.

As a result, state and federal officials

have started to change their focus from how prices are set to how well consumers understand their options. Rather than giving consumers a la carte choices, Feipel says economists in the new millennium have a "brave new philosophy: We want these gigantic companies offering bundled services."

Consider the trend. AT&T merged with SBC Communications last year, and Verizon acquired MCI Inc. Now competitors, AT&T and Verizon are offering all communications services in one package. That means consumers can pay one bill for telephone, cell phone, television and high-speed Internet services. Industry insiders call it the "triple play."

Going one step further, AT&T and Verizon also are investing in fiber optics, which use ultra-thin strands of glass to deliver information faster and in more ways than cable or phone lines can. Both have already rolled out fiber optics for television service in Texas.

Verizon also has begun construction in Fort Wayne, Ind., according to Philip Wood, vice president of public affairs policy and communications for Verizon Illinois. "It's unlike anything you can imagine or can describe," he says. "There are literally a couple hundred channels, a tremendous amount of [high-definition channels] and customized programming at a price level that is significantly less than a traditional cable."

Currently, Verizon Illinois is not on the list for getting the fiber-optic services in 2006, according to Wood, but it's a huge, long-term investment that requires digging up streets and replacing the existing cable. "It's realistic for some areas, but this is not a product or service that we're going to be able to deliver to every customer in every state, whether it be Illinois or Texas," he says. "It's driven by the market economics, as well as the external factors."

Whether deregulation would enhance Illinois' chance of landing on the future to-do list, Wood says he can't say. "This gets momentum and recognition in the marketplace. If that continues, you can draw your conclusions about where the industry is headed. Obviously, you need the infrastructure to go there."

Wood's co-worker McDermott says Illinois has an opportunity to attract those advanced services if it deregulates



local phone lines and wireless services as Indiana did in March. Indiana's new law also creates a statewide video franchise, which means telecommunications companies can buy access to the local wires through the state rather than through individual cities or municipalities.

"If we have to negotiate torturous regulatory waters in Illinois, then our investment dollars will likely go elsewhere," McDermott says.

AT&T spokesperson Rick Fox says the same. AT&T wants to be able to compete freely with cable companies in Illinois, but Fox says Indiana is a more attractive place for companies because of the regulatory environment there. Illinois still regulates the local phone lines, which means AT&T must get Commerce Commission approval to change the rates of its bundled services that include local phone service. That could take 45 days to a year, and its cable competitors, such as Comcast Corp., don't have to do that because they do not own the majority of lines that go into homes, says Beth Bosch, spokeswoman for the commission.

She adds the commission is currently reviewing a proposal by AT&T to declare all the remaining services offered to customers in the Chicago area competitively available. That means rates are competitively set because the same services are available from other telecommunications providers. The commission is still deciding if the services are truly competitive. Meanwhile, AT&T's rates are still reviewed by the commission.

"That does put the state at a competitive disadvantage," Fox says, but Illinois might not have to go as far as Indiana. "This environment changes so quickly that it's difficult to tell nine months from now what Illinois will have to do to keep up. The policies need to change to reflect today's marketplace, not the marketplace of five years ago. Five years ago, we were not competing with cable companies for local telephone service. Today we are."

But Illinois isn't sitting idle. Lawmakers have been considering a plan similar to the one implemented by the Hoosier state, much to the pleasure of the Illinois Telecommunications Association. President Douglas Dougherty says a comprehensive rewrite could bring

Illinois one step closer to enacting the next trick in the playbook: Internet Protocol Television. IPTV, for short, uses phone lines to deliver channels to the television set. While similar to high-speed Internet, it's actually more interactive for the customer and can lead to more niche programming.

While the new package of services may be convenient, consumer groups question whether they will be affordable and reliable for average customers. They fear deregulation won't create a level playing field, but an unwieldy monopoly that will drive up the costs for basic services.

The Citizens Utility Board, a Chicago-based consumer watchdog group, warns the state shouldn't move too fast. Executive Director David Kolata says the absolute first step must be to close the digital divide and expand the high-speed Internet structure. "The new form of competition depends on access to high-speed Internet. Voice-over Internet, cable telephony, all of them require, in some shape or form, access to high-speed Internet. You can't deregulate without leading to large rate increases."

While Illinois customers already have the option of buying the triple-play packages, he says that's not really the issue. "The issue is people who can't afford it or who don't want those types of options — how can we maintain the fair phone rates for them?"

While the state's telecommunications law is set to expire July 2007, Kolata says next year will be too early for a rewrite with deregulation. "We're in a transition period. The future is very promising, but that future isn't here yet. We need to advance incrementally. Let's choose policies that will bring advanced telecom and high-speed Internet as soon as possible."

That's exactly what state lawmakers began studying in the spring session. They formed a committee solely to address the digital divide. Rep. Julie Hamos, the Evanston Democrat who co-sponsored the 2001 rewrite, says the discussions are preparation for a comprehensive rewrite next spring.

Hamos says the challenges will be three-fold: determine how the state can promote competition, protect consumers and create incentives for businesses to deploy high-speed Internet to rural areas.

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***"This telecom stuff is so brutal when you get down to the Statehouse because, right away, you get diametrically opposed viewpoints."***

"We have too many pockets of unmet need," she says. "Government needs to pay attention, and we need to ask as a policy matter, 'What is the role of government?' We don't have the answers to that yet, but that is squarely the question before us."

Last year, lawmakers bobbled the political football, but didn't break the plane of the end zone. Feipel of the Commerce Commission says the Senate approved deregulation as a way to spur innovation. But the idea stalled in the House, which sided with the consumer groups and feared deregulation would cause a monopoly and fail to ensure quality.

"This telecom stuff is so brutal when you get down to the Statehouse because, right away, you get diametrically opposed viewpoints," Feipel says. "You get big companies on [one] side. On the other side, you've got the attorney general's office, CUB, Citizen Action, probably Boy Scouts of America, anyone on the side of consumers. It's a really curious paradox."

Sen. James Clayborne Jr., the Belleville Democrat who sponsored last year's stalled measure, says, "Just because we're not doing it now doesn't mean that we won't get it done. I think that everybody from both sides understands what the issues are. And the issue is: Are we going to regulate everything — which is cable, voice-over Internet, land lines, cell phones — or are we going to place our current AT&T in the same position with their competitors? That's the real issue." □

# Crowded classrooms

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The governor highlights size  
while critics point to inequitable spending

by Jasmine Washington

Cramped classrooms are one factor in the state's complex education equation. Michelle Blanchette, a math teacher at Bradley-Bourbonnais Community High School, can attest to that. She says teaching math concepts to a room full of teenagers poses more challenges than finding the value of "x."

Blanchette has about 30 students in her algebra classes, where she's accountable for their comprehension of factoring, exponents and simplification. She relies on interactive lesson aids, including graphing calculators and the Internet, to engage them, she says, because more students means less time for individual attention. Yet the new concepts prompt more questions than in her upper-level geometry classes. And Blanchette says sometimes it's difficult to make sure she gets around to answering each student's questions within a class period.

Furthermore, she says, kids benefit from smaller class size because they focus better without distractions. "I can't see any negative in the [class] numbers being low."

If overcrowded classrooms challenge teachers and students at the high school level, the problem is even more severe in the elementary grades where children are trying to learn the fundamentals. And that's the focus of a state initiative.

In February, Gov. Rod Blagojevich proposed a pilot program to enable select schools to shrink kindergarten through

third-grade classes by hiring more teachers. Critics view the initiative as little more than a baby step toward solving a much bigger state problem: inequitable school spending.

Still, most agree, baby steps are better than none at all.

Meta Minton, spokesperson for the Illinois State Board of Education, says while precise numbers can't be pinned down, class size remains a serious issue in numerous school districts throughout the state. According to the U.S. Department of Education, there were 16.5 Illinois students to every teacher last year, putting this state slightly above the national class-size ratio. The State Board reports 18.9 students per teacher for K-8 and 18.4 for 9-12. And *Education Week* magazine says the state has the 10th-largest elementary school class size in the country with 22 students.

Although estimates vary on just how overcrowded Illinois classrooms are, teacher groups do agree that smaller class size is better.

Gail Purkey, spokesperson for the Illinois Federation of Teachers, says reducing class size would allow teachers to foster more interactive relationships with their students. "Teachers can't clone themselves. There just are not enough minutes in an hour to work with each student each day."

Those few minutes can add up to a student's success, but they also can equate to job satisfaction for the teacher.

In fact, elementary school teachers have the highest burnout rates in the field, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

Besides creating more one-on-one classroom interaction, smaller classes could help retain teachers in a profession with high turnover. "There is an intrinsic value in the experience as teacher in the interaction with students," says Illinois Education Association President Ken Swanson, "because you get really excited when you feel like you are getting something accomplished. [Class size] is more of a quality issue. What may not show up in abstract makes it really meaningful in the classrooms."

Purkey says research on programs in Tennessee and Wisconsin proves that reducing class size in the primary grades does work and will work in Illinois.

Tennessee's four-year experimental class-size program, called the Student Teacher Achievement Ratio project, tracked the progress of kindergarten through third-grade students in smaller classrooms. The results revealed that students in classes of 15 to 20 achieved at higher rates than those in larger classes. Further, smaller class sizes reduced the racial achievement gap, especially among African-American males, who fared better than their counterparts in larger classes. A similar program in Wisconsin also demonstrated that smaller classes improved learning.

But a class-size initiative in California



wasn't deemed successful. That billion-dollar initiative attempted to replicate Tennessee's program on a statewide scale by spending about \$850 for every California student in kindergarten through third grade. But schools were forced to shift money away from libraries, fine arts and other supplemental programs to fulfill the requirements.

In addition, a consortium of that state's research organizations found the achievement gap wasn't reduced for minorities and low-income students. Because California's hasty education reform efforts outstripped the supply of good teachers, elementary schools serving the neediest students ended up hiring less qualified teachers. And, according to the research, California's ethnic and language diversity proved to be a major barrier to that state's program.

However, proponents note that Illinois' initiative will be limited. Under the governor's \$10 million-plan, about 200 schools could each receive a \$50,000 grant, enough to cover one teacher's salary.

The legislation, sponsored by state Rep. Michael Smith, a Canton Democrat, and state Sen. Terry Link, a Vernon Hills Democrat, also specifies that only schools on the state's Academic Early Warning list or its Watch list can apply.

Schools land on those lists if they fail to meet federal requirements under the No Child Left Behind act and state standards on testing, attendance and graduation. Currently, more than 900 schools are on those lists, more than half of them elementary schools. Nearly 400 are in Chicago. With a student-teacher ratio of 20 to 1, more than 200 schools in Chicago School District 299 would qualify under the initiative.

Minton says the State Board will disburse the money "across a diverse cross-section of schools." However, Republican lawmakers aren't convinced. During the Senate floor debate on the measure this spring, Republican Dan

Cronin of Elmhurst cautioned his GOP colleagues: "If you think this money is going to find its way into your district under the governor's discretion, you're wrong."

Other opponents, while recognizing the potential benefits, argued the state could put the money to better use. "A lot of programs sound good in an election year," said Sen. David Luechtefeld, an Okawville Republican. "We don't need to spend \$10 million to tell us something we already know."

It's not surprising Republicans are

This earned the state a D+ in school funding equity from *Education Week* magazine this year. The state's 2005 Nation's Report Card confirmed that Illinois' school financing system fosters inequity. And the National Assessment of Educational Progress found that Illinois has one of the largest learning achievement gaps between students who live in poor districts and students who live in wealthier districts.

There has been no progress toward a solution to this problem in recent years.

These trends don't sit well with one state lawmaker in particular. Sen. James Meeks, a Chicago Independent, is even circulating petitions to run as a third-party candidate for governor because of this issue. He launched his effort after Blagojevich vowed to continue his pledge not to raise general state taxes in a second term, but Meeks said in a press conference that his request for a comprehensive, four-year plan for school funding was under discussion with the governor.

This is not a new issue for Meeks. He introduced a

measure last spring that would have raised the state income tax and lowered local property taxes as a way to put the state's contribution to schools in the billions.

This idea has been kicked around for years. But if such a move might be tricky to implement, it is even trickier to sell politically. No official wants to be seen as voting for a tax hike. So this spring, in a run-up to next fall's elections, lawmakers again chose not to take major strides in reforming school finances. Instead, they took another baby step and approved the pilot program to alleviate crowded conditions in some of the state's classrooms.

Des Plaines Republican Rep. Rosemary Mulligan summarized the legislative perspective during the House floor debate. "We understand a commitment to schools. We just lack the understanding of what needs to be done." □

*Photograph courtesy of Principal Deborah Nuzzi*



*Students at Robert Frost Elementary School in Bourbonnais*

wary. But the governor got criticism from members of his own party, as well. The Senate's Latino Caucus even addressed a letter to Blagojevich, arguing that his education initiatives are insufficient to meet their needs.

"The Latino community suffers from a crisis in overcrowded schools," they wrote, "and we need far more than three new schools to ensure that the system can meet the space demands of universal preschool as well as permit children to attend schools in their neighborhood."

Though Blagojevich has proposed \$400 million in education spending for the fiscal year that begins in July, critics and supporters alike agree that his classroom initiative points to the need to overhaul the way the state funds schools.

Illinois schools are primarily funded through property taxes rather than the state income tax, meaning school spending is pegged to local wealth.

## Senior senator loses



Adeline Geo-Karis

**Adeline Geo-Karis** of Zion, currently the state Senate's longest-serving member and first woman dean, has served her last session with the Illinois General

Assembly. After more than three decades of public service, the 88-year-old Geo-Karis lost the Republican primary election to Warren Township Supervisor **Suzanne Simpson** of Grayslake.

Geo-Karis was born in Greece and educated at Northwestern and DePaul universities. She served as mayor of Zion while in the Senate and ran her own law firm until January. Geo-Karis was the first Lake County woman to be elected to the Illinois House in 1972. She then switched to the Senate and led the Republican Caucus in that chamber. She says she is most proud of legislation for nuclear safety preparedness, alternative sources of energy and a "guilty but mentally ill" law, which allows people with mental illnesses to receive treatment while serving time in jail.

Losing re-election, she says, won't stop her from being active.

"Believe it or not, I'm delighted it's over with, and I have no regrets," she told *Illinois Issues*. "I'll figure out something. I can't walk worth a dime, but my mind is active."

## CLIPFILE

"Topinka says Karl Rove urged her to run, hoping to offset in Illinois a probable gubernatorial loss in New York. Would she like President Bush to campaign for her? An aide says not exactly: 'We just want him to raise money.' Topinka does not demur as the aide adds: 'Late at night.' Pause. 'In an undisclosed location.'"

*George Will in an April Washington Post column in which he identified **Judy Baar Topinka** as the one Republican in the nation with a shot at taking back the governor's mansion in a primarily Democratic state. A spokesman later told The Associated Press the comment didn't reflect how Topinka feels about Bush.*

## Former Daniels aide pleads guilty to fraud

**Michael Tristano**, who was chief of staff to former House Minority Leader **Lee Daniels**, pleaded guilty to one count of mail fraud in an agreement with federal prosecutors that requires him to cooperate in an ongoing state political corruption probe. In exchange, prosecutors dropped charges of theft, extortion, conspiracy and other mail fraud counts. A potential 37-month sentence will be reduced to a sentence of 12 to 20 months. Sentencing is scheduled for June 14.

Tristano admitted to diverting state employees to work on Republican campaigns between 1998 and 2001, costing taxpayers as much as \$200,000 in state money and resources. Daniels, who was minority leader for nearly two decades and speaker of the House from 1995 to 1997, has not been charged with wrongdoing. The Elmhurst Republican has said he will retire at the end of his term.

## First woman on state Supreme Court to retire



Justice Mary Ann McMorrow

Justice **Mary Ann McMorrow**, the first woman on the Illinois Supreme Court, will retire from the court in July. Illinois Appellate Court Judge **Anne Burke** of Chicago was appointed to fill the vacancy until December 1, 2008.

McMorrow, who also was the first woman to serve as chief justice of the state's high court and the first woman to head any branch of state government, announced in April that she will close out her three-decade run as a judge with her July 5 retirement.

The Chicagoan served as chief justice from 2002 to 2005. She had been an appellate and Cook County Circuit judge prior to her 1992 election to the state Supreme Court.

Even before becoming a judge, McMorrow's career was marked by a series of firsts. She was the only woman to graduate from the Loyola University School of Law in 1953 and the first woman prosecutor to try felony cases in the Cook County state's attorney's office.

Despite her knack for breaking new ground, McMorrow warns there's limited value in comparing her to Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. "There's no effort on my part to be the middle ground," she told *Illinois Issues* (see November 2002, page 20) in an interview during her first year as chief justice. "Whatever opinions I write are because those are my beliefs, not because I'm a woman or I'm a first."

According to the Supreme Court, McMorrow wrote 225 of its majority opinions, including the 1997 ruling for *Best v. Taylor Machine Works*, which deemed unconstitutional legislation that had capped noneconomic damages for injuries caused by negligence. In the 2002 decision on *Happel v. Wal-Mart Stores Inc.*, McMorrow wrote an opinion that imposed a duty on pharmacies to inform customers of any known severe side effects of their prescriptions.

She took some heat from friends and neighbors after writing the 1999 opinion that invalidated the anti-crime package known as the Safe Neighborhoods Law.

"My friends read about [the decision] in the newspaper and said, 'How could you do that,'" McMorrow told *Illinois Issues* in 2002. "But they didn't understand. The title of the act was misleading and the basis for finding the act unconstitutional was perfectly valid. It violated the single subject rule [requiring legislation to address only one issue], which to the average person is something they know nothing about, but it was a decision that had to be made under the law."

Burke, who has been a First District state appellate court judge since 1995, stated in a release: "This appointment is especially meaningful to me since I will be succeeding a woman who has been an inspiration and mentor to so many of us." Former state lawmaker **Alan Greiman**, an appointee to the appellate court, will replace Burke.

For updated news see the *Illinois Issues* Web site at <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>



## Congressman to retire

U.S. Rep. **Lane Evans** of Rock Island announced he will not run for another term. He has represented the 17th House District for 24 years.

Evans, who was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1995, was hospitalized briefly for severe fatigue in February. Parkinson's, a progressive neurological disease, doesn't affect mental capacity but does cause speech and balance problems, muscle stiffness and tremors. "I have come to recognize that the time needed to address my health makes it difficult to wage a campaign and carry out my work as a representative," he stated in a release.

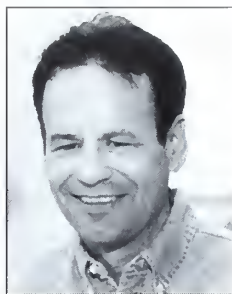
Evans' announcement sets up a new contest for the 17th District seat. Democrats must choose someone by August 31 to face Andrea Zinga, winner of a three-way Republican primary race. Zinga lost to Evans in 2004 by 21 percent. Evans has endorsed **Phil Hare**, his long-time district director.

During his career, Evans built a reputation of fighting for veterans and working people. A Vietnam-era Marine, Evans went to college on the GI Bill and then to Georgetown Law School. Elected to Congress in 1982, he sits on the House Armed Services Committee and since 1997 has been the senior Democrat on the Veterans Affairs Committee.

Early in his career, he pushed legislation to create a pilot program that established community-based centers to help veterans cope with such problems as post-traumatic stress syndrome and to provide them with marriage and job counseling. The program has grown to include hundreds of veterans centers around the country. He won medical compensation for Vietnam veterans exposed to the defoliant Agent Orange and pushed to disclose health risks to veterans suffering from Gulf War syndrome.

Evans also fought to ban landmines. His most recent work for veterans includes a move to increase help for homeless veterans, increase benefits for worker training and expand VA home loans.

"His decision — understandable as it is — is a loss not only for his district but for our state, and for all of America," said Illinois U.S. Sen. Richard Durbin in a tribute on the Senate floor. "From the Quad Cities to Quincy, Springfield, Decatur, Carlinville and towns throughout his district, Lane Evans is deeply respected, and his service will be greatly missed."



U.S. Rep. Lane Evans

## H ONORS

The Rev. **Thomas Behrens**, Dr. **Richard Moy**, **William Osborn**, **Garry Wills**, **DaHuang Zhou** and **Shan Zuo Zhou** are the 2006 laureates to the Lincoln Academy of Illinois. The academy was established in 1965 to recognize Illinois natives or residents who have brought honor to the state.

Behrens in 1976 founded The Night Ministry of Chicago, which assists at-risk youth and the homeless. Moy, a native of Naperville, led efforts to create the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine in Springfield and was dean of the program from 1970 to 1993. Osborn, chairman and CEO of Northern Trust Corp. and The Northern Trust Co. of Chicago, has served on boards dealing with the arts, education and social services.

Wills of Evanston is a Pulitzer Prize-winning author and professor of history emeritus at Northwestern University whose books include *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America*, *What Jesus Meant* and *Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit*. The Zhou Brothers, natives of China who settled in Chicago, collaborate on paintings, prints and sculpture. They opened Chicago's ZhouB Art Center in 2004.

**Lars Peter Hansen**, an economics professor at the University of Chicago, was selected to receive the 2006 Erwin Plein Nemmers Prize in Economics. The prize carries a \$150,000 stipend. Hansen was given the prize "for rigorously relating economic theory to observed macroeconomic and asset market behavior and for innovations in modeling optimal policy under uncertainty," according to Northwestern University, which grants the award.

## Scholars seek SARS cure

**Susan Baker**, **Naina Barretto**, **Andrew Mesecar**, **Kiira Ratia** and **Bernard Santarsiero** are researchers in Chicago who contributed to a finding that may lead to a treatment for SARS.

Baker, a molecular virologist, and Barretto, who specializes in microbiology and immunology, are affiliated with the Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine. Mesecar is an associate professor of pharmaceutical biotechnology at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where Ratia is a graduate student.

The researchers, along with a pair from the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, Calif., identified an enzyme in the virus that causes SARS, severe acute respiratory syndrome, which killed 744 people in a 2003 outbreak in Asia. The molecular roadmap they provided may guide scientists to design medications to treat SARS and such related illnesses as the cold, bronchitis and pneumonia.

The research was funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health and published in the March 27 issue of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

## Illinois musicologist reconstructs unfinished Beethoven piano trio

**William Kinderman**, a University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign musicologist, has reconstructed an unfinished, little-known work by Ludwig van Beethoven: the first movement of his Piano Trio in F minor.

The movement, which Beethoven worked on in 1816, existed only in bits in loose sheets and sketchbooks spread between



William Kinderman

Princeton, N.J., and Berlin, Germany, before Kinderman pieced it together. He reports on his efforts in a recent journal.

## Disabled Illinoisans face poverty and joblessness

Illinoisans with disabilities struggle with an unemployment rate of more than 70 percent. The joblessness crisis means, among other things, that people with disabilities are some of the poorest members of society and, in turn, inordinately reliant upon social programs, including Medicare and Medicaid.

The federal government recently implemented the Medicare Part D prescription drug program (see *Illinois Issues*, March, page 29). Difficulties have occurred with enrollment since it began on October 15, 2005. I have heard countless stories of people with disabilities and senior citizens going without necessary prescriptions because of glitches in the new system. For these populations, going without medications for even one day can have deadly results.

In addition, Congress cut several domestic programs in the fiscal year 2006 federal budget. Those cuts will have damaging effects on impoverished people throughout the United States; however, two of them will have a severely negative impact on people with disabilities in Illinois.

The \$16 billion cut to Medicaid, in actuality, means that for many members of the lowest income brackets, preventive medicine will be a thing of the past. Likely, people on Medicaid will be flooding emergency rooms to have minor procedures done that could have been performed in an office or clinic. And those with serious illnesses that could have been avoided by using preventive medicine will be hospitalized. In the end it will cost taxpayers more to treat illnesses that result from lack of prevention.

The second cut that affects people with disabilities adversely is the 1 percent across-the-board cut dealt the independent living community. In real terms, the budget cut will lead to a cutback in services delivered by Illinois' 14 centers for independent living that receive money through the Rehabilitation Act. In the past, the Consumer Stipend Program has allowed hundreds

of Illinoisans with disabilities to attend conferences that share knowledge on such topics as civil rights, self-advocacy and living independently.

**Gerard Broeker**  
Executive Director  
Statewide  
Independent Living  
Council of Illinois

## Lincoln's Cabinet is a good model

Although I enjoyed Allen Guelzo's essay review of Doris Kearns Goodwin's *Team of Rivals* (see *Illinois Issues*, February, page 30), I felt his answer to his title question, "Can Lincoln's making and maintenance of his Cabinet be a model for others?" is too limited in scope. I believe the answer is a solid "Yes."

Guelzo seems to feel that there is a lack of authentic criteria — other than precedence — for a solid evaluation, and that Kearns Goodwin did not provide enough information on the subject. I believe she did and that good criteria are available. This is because my yardstick is a contemporary, well-documented standard for successful group problem solving — the mediation process.

Providing ample evidence on this basis, Kearns Goodwin tells us Lincoln chose creative, independent thinkers who often had reason to oppose not only each other, but also, especially, Lincoln. Fortunately, his humor, boundless human understanding and tolerance, and brilliant logic gained their respectful support. This is what mediation is: listening responsively to freely expressed opposing views, considering proposed solutions and finally choosing action by consensus. All these are skills that can be learned.

In my opinion, the mediation process used in Lincoln's Cabinet should be formally designated an essential part of the democratic process, providing us with a perfect model.

When pros and cons are well aired, the wisest, most widely supported solutions are likely to be chosen.

When the choice is by consensus, the goal becomes finding the best answer

rather than "winning." Consensus has two advantages over voting: Less bitterness for the losers and fewer poor decisions — witness the public harm often done by legislative and judicial obsessions with winning.

Lincoln observed that in a democracy "every step you take must seem wise to the public mind." Think, for instance, of what happens when Cabinet members are "group-thinkers," whether well or poorly qualified for office. The left-out opposition may come adrift and wreak havoc — Lincoln's fear. Members will tend to have but one idea among them. And there will probably be secrets and surprises that erode public trust. For example, when Colin Powell supplied opposition within the Bush Cabinet, there was greater public trust and approval than now.

The fact that Lincoln had the wisdom to use the mediation process with his Cabinet is but another example of his genius. That he had the gift of empathy to such an extreme degree made him wonderfully successful.

He was indeed a Cabinet model to follow, a truly democratic process.

**Barbara Fiudley Stuart**  
Normal



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Charles N. Wheeler III



## George Ryan's conviction may have made other politicians nervous

by Charles N. Wheeler III

**I**f ominous winds are sending chills up and down the spines of the muckety-mucks frequenting the 16th floor of the James R. Thompson Center and the 5th floor of Chicago's City Hall, don't blame vagrant breezes off Lake Michigan.

Instead, look south a few blocks to the Dirksen Federal Building, where a few weeks ago a federal jury found former Gov. George Ryan and Chicago businessman Larry Warner guilty on all counts in a marathon public corruption trial.

One day after Easter, the six-woman, six-man panel convicted Ryan of 18 counts of racketeering conspiracy, mail fraud, making false statements to investigators and tax fraud. Jurors nailed Warner, a Ryan friend, on 12 counts of racketeering conspiracy, mail fraud, extortion and money laundering.

Minutes after the verdict was announced, the former governor said he was "disappointed" and planned to appeal. "I believe this decision today is not in accordance with the kind of public service I've provided to the people of Illinois over the years," Ryan said.

Discussing an appeal, Dan Webb, a former U.S. attorney who headed Ryan's defense team, noted the "unusual circumstances" around the decision by U.S. District Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer to dismiss two jurors who had lied about previous arrests after eight days of deliberation. The judge replaced

*With the Ryan case under their belts, the high-powered federal team of prosecutors and investigators now can concentrate on a number of ongoing probes targeting the state and the city.*

the pair with alternates and instructed the reconstituted panel to start over — a task the defense said was virtually impossible.

But the new jury announced its verdict on its 11th day of deliberations, capping a seven-month trial during which federal prosecutors portrayed Ryan as a corrupt official who, as secretary of state and governor, betrayed the public trust to enrich Warner and other friends in return for cash and other gifts for himself and for his family.

Throughout the trial, Ryan's attorneys stressed that not one witness testified that he saw Ryan take a bribe, while Warner's lawyers contended that he was a businessman whose supposed offenses were simply the way politics has been conducted in Illinois since statehood.

Neither argument persuaded jurors

to acquit on even a single count, though, leading to a couple of significant conclusions that should terrify ethically challenged politicians:

- Even without direct eyewitness testimony, an overwhelming amount of circumstantial evidence in a political corruption case can convince jurors beyond a reasonable doubt that a crime has been committed.

"There was no smoking gun in this case," Assistant U.S. Attorney Patrick Collins, the lead prosecutor, told reporters. "This case was tried witness by witness, piece of evidence by piece of evidence, and it was only by looking at the totality of the case that the true picture could be shown to this jury. And that was a picture of corruption of the highest levels of government."

- Jurors are willing to find that a spoils system of rewarding family and friends with jobs and contracts is a federal crime, even if it does embody the state's traditional political culture.

"If they keep stealing, there will still be agents chasing them and prosecutors going after them," U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald said. "Hopefully at some point somebody realizes it's in the best interest not to do it. I think that we'll just have to keep doing our jobs and hope that we run out of business at some point."

That point doesn't appear anywhere near, however, which may help explain any goose bumps found among Gov.

Rod Blagojevich's palace guard or in Chicago Mayor Richard Daley's inner circle.

With the Ryan case under their belts, the high-powered federal team of prosecutors and investigators now can concentrate on a number of ongoing probes targeting the state and the city.

For example, federal, state and local gumshoes are scrutinizing Blagojevich's employment and contracting practices, in the wake of numerous "pay to play" allegations, including one — later recanted — from Chicago Alderman Richard Mell, the governor's father-in-law.

In addition, federal grand juries have subpoenaed hiring records from at least three state agencies and the governor's office, and inquiries also are under way into contract awards for services as diverse as lottery advertising and power-washing state buildings.

Moreover, a little more than two weeks before the Ryan verdict, Auditor General William Holland said he was sending state and federal investigators

***Will continued federal heat finally melt what seems to be Illinoisans' long-standing tolerance for political knavery?***

audit findings revealing some \$700,000 in questionable spending by state transportation officials. Holland routinely dings Blagojevich's agencies for mismanagement, inefficiency and plain sloppy record-keeping, but in only a handful of cases have auditors uncovered what they believe might be criminal violations.

Patronage and kickbacks at Daley's City Hall also appear on the feds' radar.

Former City Clerk James Laski pleaded guilty to bribery in March as part of an ongoing investigation into

corruption in the city's Hired Truck program.

Meanwhile, Robert Sorich, the mayor's former patronage chief, is awaiting trial later this month on mail fraud related to hiring practices. In a 91-page court document filed last month, prosecutors accused Sorich of ordering his secretary to delete computer files and shred paper files with data about political hiring.

Will continued federal heat finally melt what seems to be Illinoisans' long-standing tolerance for political knavery? Prosecutor Collins has the final word: "Unless and until the state, city and county learn there are victims of corruption, there are tangible consequences of corruption, [and] unless and until people who vote understand that there are important consequences in their public officials' acts of dishonesty, this system will not change." □

*Charles N. Wheeler III is director of the Public Affairs Reporting program at the University of Illinois at Springfield.*

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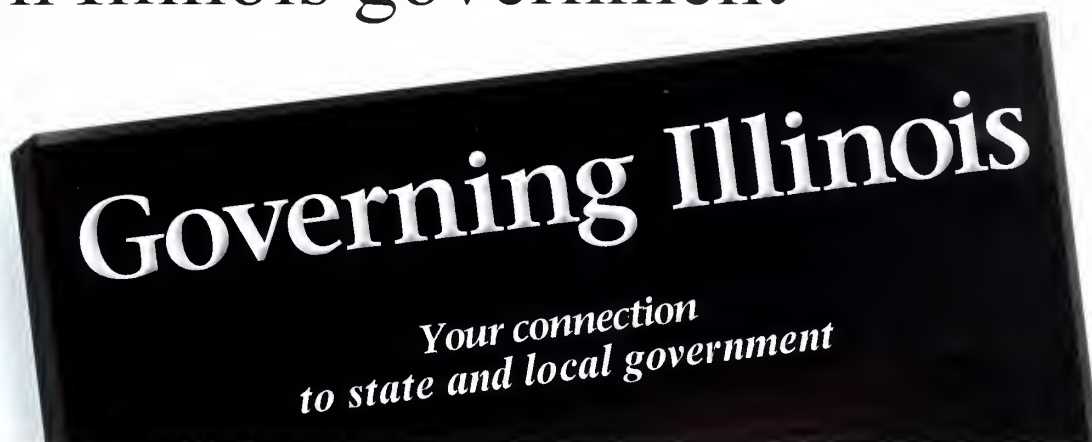
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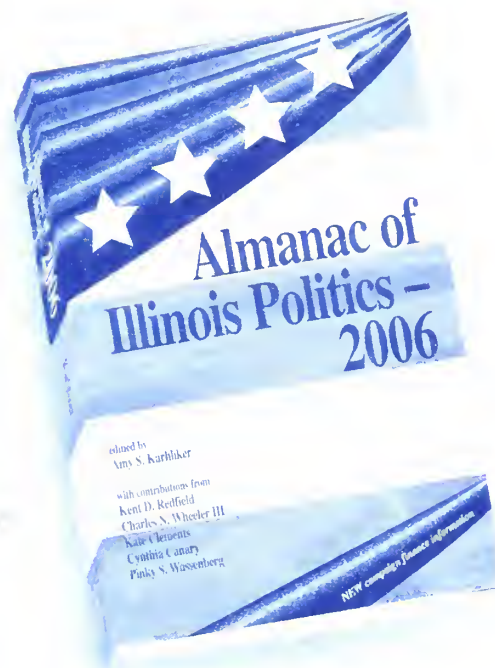


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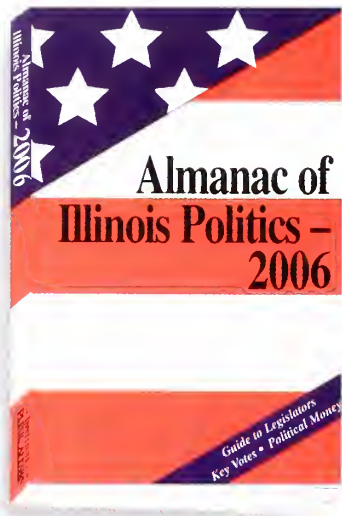
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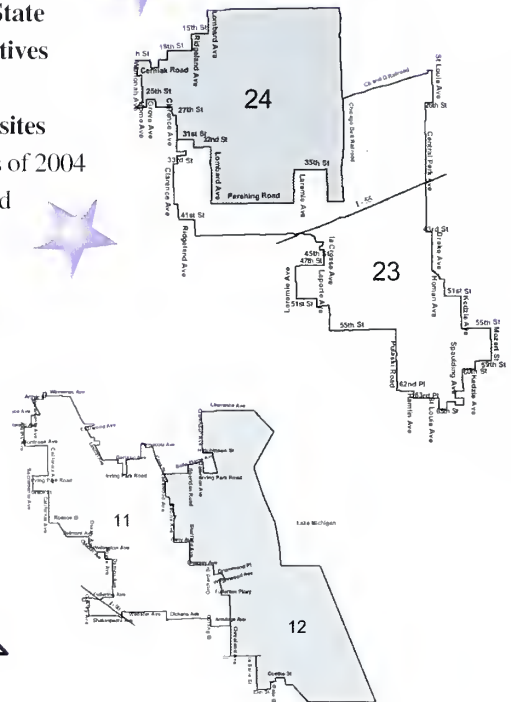
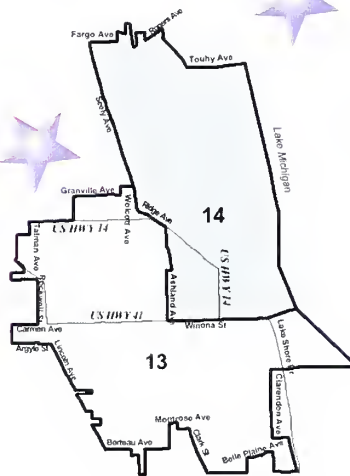
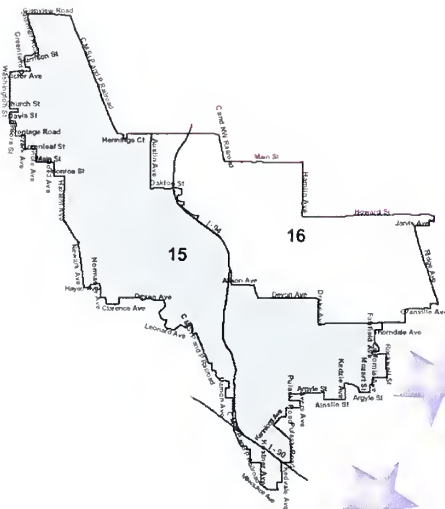
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